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# **CASE LAW OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA**

Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law

This compilation was prepared by the Data Protection Unit of the Council of Europe ([dataprotection@coe.int](mailto:dataprotection@coe.int)) and the European Court of Human Rights takes no responsibility for its content. The Court's judgments are accessible on its Internet site (<http://www.echr.coe.int>).

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Eur. Court of HR, Szuluk v. The United Kingdom, judgment of 2 June 2009, application no. 36936/05. The applicant complains under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights about the monitoring by prison authorities of medical correspondence between the applicant – a convicted prisoner – and his external specialist doctor.	128
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Eur. Court of HR, Mustafa Sezgin Tanrikulu v Turkey, judgment of 18 July 2017, application no. 27473/06. The applicant complained that the Turkish Court's decision authorising the interception of his communications had been unlawful and in violation of Article 8 of the Convention because of its indiscriminate nature. The Court found a violation of Article 8.	243

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Eur. Court of HR, Algirdas Butkevicius v. Lithuania, judgment of 14 June 2022, application No 70489/17. 348  
The case concerned a telephone conversation between Mr Butkevicius and a mayor that was secretly recorded during a pre-trial investigation into possible corruption in connection with territorial planning and was made public at a hearing of the Seimas's (the Lithuanian Parliament's) Anti-Corruption Commission. At the time, Mr Butkevicius was the Prime Minister of Lithuania. The Court found that, even if Mr Butkevicius's reputation had been affected by the disclosure of his telephone conversation, there was no evidence that it had been affected to such an extent that it could count as a disproportionate interference with his rights guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention.

### **DNA Database**

Eur. Court of HR, S. and Marper v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 4 December 2008, 120  
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Eur. Court of HR, Mifsud v. Malta, judgement of 29 January 2019, application no. 62257/15. 272  
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Eur. Court of HR, Trajkovski and Chipovski v. North Macedonia, judgment of 13 February 2020, 296  
application nos. 53205/13 and 63320/13. The case concerned the retention of DNA data of convicted persons. The indefinite retention is a disproportionate interference with the applicants' right to privacy.

### **GPS Data**

Eur. Court of HR, Uzun v. Germany, judgment of 2 September 2010, application no. 35623/05. 346  
Applicant complained about information obtained on him via GPS surveillance. The Court considered that adequate and effective safeguards against abuse had been in place.

## Health Data

- Eur. Court of HR, *Z. v. Finland*, judgment of 25 February 1997, application no. 22009/93. The applicant complains about the seizure of medical records and their inclusion in investigation file without the patient's prior consent in criminal proceedings; the limitation of the duration of the confidentiality of the medical data concerned; the publication of her identity and HIV infection in a court judgment given in those proceedings. 64
- Eur. Court of HR, *Anne-Marie Andersson v. Sweden*, judgment of 27 August 1997, application no. 20022/92. The applicant complained of the impossibility for a patient, prior to the communication of personal and confidential medical data by medical authority to a social services authority, to challenge the measure before a court. 69
- Eur. Court of HR, *M.S. v. Sweden*, judgment of 27 August 1997, application no. 20837/92. The applicant maintained that the communication of her medical records by the clinic to the Social Insurance Office constituted a violation of her right to respect for private life under Article 8 of the Convention. 71
- Eur. Court of HR, *L.L. v. France*, judgment of 10 October 2006, application no. 7508/02. The applicant complains about the production and use in court proceedings of documents from his medical records, without his consent and without a medical expert having been appointed in that connection. 110
- Eur. Court of HR, *I. v. Finland*, judgment of 3 April 2007, application no. 20511/03, Complaint that the applicant's colleagues had unlawfully consulted her confidential patient records and that the district health authority had failed to provide adequate safeguards against unauthorised access of medical data. 114
- Eur. Court of HR, *Szuluk v. The United Kingdom*, judgment of 2 June 2009, application no. 36936/05. The applicant complains under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights about the monitoring by prison authorities of medical correspondence between the applicant – a convicted prisoner – and his external specialist doctor. 128
- Eur. Court of HR. *Mitkus v. Latvia*, judgment of 2 October 2012 application no. 7259/03. The applicant complains under Article 8 of the Convention that a newspaper article disclosed information about his HIV infection and published his photo. 162
- Eur. Court of HR, *Avilkina and Others v. Russia*, judgment of 6 June 2013, application no. 1585/09. The applicants claimed that the unjustified disclosure of confidential medical data relating to the refusal of Jehovah's Witnesses to undergo a blood transfusion, is contrary to Article 8. The order of the disclosure of the applicants' confidential medical information without giving them any notice or opportunity to object or appeal is illegitimate. 173
- Eur. Court of HR. *Radu v. the Republic of Moldova*, judgment of 15 April 2014, application no. 50073/07. The applicant complained about a State-owned hospital's disclosure of medical information to her employer. The proceedings were brought against the hospital and the Police Academy claiming compensation for a breach of her right to private life. The Court found that the interference was not "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of Article 8. 96

- Eur. Court of HR, L.H. v Latvia, judgment of 29 April 2014, application no. 52019/07. The applicant complained about a lack of precision of domestic law that allows public authorities the collection of his medical data. The Court found that the applicable law had failed to indicate with sufficient clarity the scope of discretion conferred on competent authorities and manner of its exercise. 177
- Eur. Court of HR, Surikov v. Ukraine, judgment of 26 January 2017, application no. 42788/06. The applicant complained that his employer had arbitrarily collected, retained, and used sensitive, obsolete and irrelevant data concerning his mental health in considering his application for promotion, and had unlawfully and unfairly disclosed this data to the applicant's colleagues and to a civil court during a public hearing. The Court found a violation of Article 8. 225
- Eur. Court of HR, Aycaguer v France, judgment of 22 June 2017, application no. 8806/12. The case concerned the applicant's refusal to undergo biological testing, the result of which was to be included in the national computerised DNA database (FNAEG). The Court found a violation of Article 8, noting that no appropriate action had been taken on the reservation by the Constitutional Court regarding the constitutionality of FNAEG and that there was no provision for differentiating the period of storage depending on the nature and gravity of the offences committed. Secondly, the Court ruled that the regulations on the storage of DNA profiles in the FNAEG did not provide the data subjects with sufficient protection. 235
- Eur. Court of HR, Dagregorio and Mosconi v. France, judgment of 22 June 2017, application no. 65714/11. The applicants considered that their conviction for refusing to undergo biological testing amounted to a disproportionate interference with their right to respect for their private life and their physical integrity. Relying on Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) read in conjunction with Article 8, they alleged discrimination, emphasising that only individuals suspected or convicted of a certain category of criminal offence were subject to biological testing. Under Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association), they alleged that there has been a violation of their trade-union freedom. Lastly, under Article 14 in conjunction with Article 11, they submitted that the authorities should not have treated them in the same way as the persons targeted by the legislature when the FNAEG had been set up. The Court unanimously declared the application inadmissible. 237
- Eur. Court of HR, Y.G. v. Russia, judgment of 30 August 2022, application no 8647/12. The applicant alleged that his personal data including data concerning health data was unlawfully disclosed through a database being sold in a market. The Court found a violation of Article 8. 356

## **Identity**

- Eur. Court of HR, Ciubotaru v. Moldova, judgment of 27 April 2010, application no. 27138/04. The applicant complains under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights about the authorities' refusal to register his Romanian ethnic identity in his identity papers. 137
- Eur. Court of Hr, Beizaras and Levickas v. Lithuania, judgement of 14 January 2020, application no. 41288/15. The case concerned two young men in a relationship which posted a photograph of the couple kissing on Facebook, thing that led to hundreds of online hate comments and threads. Both the prosecuting authorities and the courts refused to launch a pre-trial investigation for incitement to hatred and violence against homosexuals. The Court concluded that that there had been a violation of Article 14, taken in conjunction with Article 8 of the Convention and violation of the Article 13. 289

Eur. Court of HR, Hudorovic and others v. Slovenia, judgement of 10 March 2020, application nos. 24816/14 and 25140/14. The case concerned complaints by the applicants, who are all Slovenian nationals of Roma origin, about an alleged lack of access to drinking water and sanitation, taking into consideration their lifestyle and minority status. The Court found that the authorities had taken positive steps to provide them with adequate access to safe drinking water therefore there had been no violation of Article 8. 297

Eur. Court of HR, Y.T. v. Bulgaria, judgement of 09 July 2020, application number 4171/16. The case concerned a transsexual (Y.T.) who had taken steps to change his physical appearance and whose request for (female to male) gender reassignment had been refused by the Bulgarian courts. The Court concluded that the domestic authorities' refusal to grant legal recognition to Y.T.'s gender reassignment, without giving relevant and sufficient reasons, had thus constituted an unjustified interference with Y.T.'s right to respect for his private life. 308

Eur. Court of HR, Rana v. Hungary, judgement of 16 July 2020, application number 40888/17. The case concerned a transgender man from Iran who had obtained asylum in Hungary but could not legally change his gender and name in that country. The Court concluded that a fair balance had not been struck between the public interest and the applicant's right to respect for his private life owing to the refusal to give him access to the legal gender recognition procedure. 309

### **Information Concerning Professional Activities**

Eur. Court of HR, Niemietz v. Germany, judgment of 16 December 1992, application no. 13710/88. The applicant complained about the search of his office in course of criminal proceedings against a third party. 56

Eur. Court of HR. Michaud v. France, judgment of 6 December 2012, application no. 12323/11. The applicant alleged that the information protected by lawyer – client privilege is particularly sensitive. The Court noted that the impugned interference was “in accordance with the law” within the meaning of Article 8. 168

Eur. Court of HR. Saint-Paul Luxembourg S.A. v. Luxembourg, judgment of 18 April 2013, application no. 26419/10. The applicant argued that the search and seizure operation carried out at his company's premises had been intrusive. The incident amounted to interference with the applicant company's right to respect for its “home”. The Court recognized that the interference had been in accordance with the law and had pursued several legitimate aims but ruled that these measures weren't necessary at this stage of the investigation. 171

Eur. Court of HR. Case Yuditskaya and others v. Russia, judgment of 12 February 2015, application no. 5678/06. The applicants alleged, in particular, that there had been no grounds for conducting a search of the premises of their law firm and seizing their computers. The Court concluded that there has been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention. 183

Eur. Court of HR. Case of M.N. and Others v. San Marino, judgement of 7 July 2015, application no. 28005/12. The applicants complained about the decision ordering the seizure of banking documents relating to them, alleging that they did not have effective access to court to complain about it and that it interfered with their private life and correspondence. 187

- Eur. Court of HR. Case of Sõro v. Estonia, judgment of 3 September 2015, application no. 22588/08. The applicant alleged that the publication, thirteen years after the restoration of Estonian independence, of information about his service in the former State security organisations (KGB) had violated his right to respect for his private life. The Court rules that such a passage of time must have decreased any threat the applicant could have initially posed to the new democratic system. The Court concluded that the applicant's right to respect for his private life was subject to a disproportionate interference. 189
- Eur. Court of HR, G.S.B. v. Switzerland, judgment of 22 December 2015, application no. 28601/11. The case concerned the transmission to the US tax authorities of the applicant's bank account details in connection with an administrative cooperation agreement between Switzerland and the USA. The Court noted that the applicant had had access to several effective and genuine procedural safeguards in order to contest the transmission of his bank details and to secure protection against arbitrary implementation of agreements concluded between Switzerland and the US. 197
- Eur. Court of HR, Breyer v. Germany, judgment of 30 January 2020, application no. 50001/12. The case concerned the storage of pre-paid SIM card users' data by telecommunications companies. The court concluded that Germany had not overstepped the limits of its discretion ("margin of appreciation") in applying the law concerned and there had been no violation of the applicants' rights by the collection of the data. 291
- Eur. Court of HR, Bagirov v. Azerbaijan, judgement of 25 June 2020, application number 81024/12 and 28198/15. The case concerned applicant's complaint that he had been suspended from practising law for one year, then disbarred because of statements he had made about police brutality and the functioning of the judicial system in the country. 306
- Eur. Court of HR, Yunusova and Yunusov v. Azerbaijan, judgement of 16 July 2020, application no. 68817/14. The case concerned the detention of human-rights defenders for the purpose of silencing and punishing them for their NGO activities. The court concluded that there has been violation of the Convention. 311
- Eur. Court of HR, Särgava v. Estonia, judgment of 16 November 2021, application no 698/19. Violation of Article 8 due to the search of a lawyer's office, home and vehicle and the obtaining of information from his computer and telephone. The Court decided that the information retrieved from the computer and mobile phone was covered by the lawyer's professional secrecy and its seizure was in violation of Article 8. 330
- Eur. Court of HR, Naumenko and Sia Rix Shipping v. Latvia, judgment of 23 June 2022, application No 50805/14. A search of an applicant's business premises and the seizure of a large quantity of documents and electronic files during an unannounced operation by the Competition Authority is legal if this interference with the right to privacy is justified. 353

### **Interception of Communications**

- Eur. Court of HR, Malone v. The United Kingdom, judgment of 2 August 1984, application no. 8691/79. Interception of postal and telephone communications and release of information obtained from "metering" of telephones, both effected by or on behalf of the police within the general context of criminal investigation. 46

Eur. Court of HR, <i>Kruslin v. France</i> , judgment of 24 April 1990, application no. 11801/85, and Eur. Court of HR, <i>Huvig v. France</i> , judgment of 24 April 1990, application no. 11105/84. The applicants complained about the telephone tapping carried out by senior police officer under warrant issued by investigating judge.	53
Eur. Court of HR, <i>Halford v. The United Kingdom</i> , judgment of 25 June 1997, application no. 20605/92. The applicant complains that telephone calls made from her office in Merseyside Police Headquarters had been intercepted and that she had not had available to her any effective remedy for this complaint.	67
Eur. Court of HR, <i>Lambert v. France</i> , judgment of 24 August 1998, application no. 23618/94. Judgment whereby Court of Cassation refused a person locus standi to complain of interception of some of his telephone conversations, on the ground that it was a third party's line that had been tapped.	73
Eur. Court of HR, <i>Amann v. Switzerland</i> , judgment of 16 February 2000, application no. 27798/95. The applicant complained that the interception of the telephone call and the creation by the Public Prosecutor's Office of a card on him and the storage of that card in the Confederation's card index had violated Article 8.	75
Eur. Court of HR, <i>Cotlet v. Romania</i> , judgment of 3 June 2003, application no. 38565/97. The applicant complained under Article 8 of the Convention of interference with his correspondence with the Convention institutions. He also complained of a violation of his right of individual application, as guaranteed by Article 34 of the Convention.	91
Eur. Court of HR, <i>Matwiejczuk v. Poland</i> , judgment of 2 December 2003, application no. 37641/97 (No violation of Article 34). The applicant complained about the length of his pre-trial detention, the length of the criminal proceedings against him and that his letters were monitored during his detention.	95
Eur. Court of HR, <i>Pisk-Piskowski v. Poland</i> , judgment of 14 January 2005, application no. 92/03. The applicant complained that the proceedings resulting in his conviction had been unfair and that his right to respect for his correspondence had been infringed.	99
Eur. Court of HR, <i>Copland v. United Kingdom</i> , judgment of 3 April 2007, application no. 62617/00, Complaint that, during the applicant's employment at the College, her telephone, e-mail and internet usage had been monitored at the Deputy Principal's instigation.	112
Eur. Court HR, <i>Liberty and others v. United Kingdom</i> , judgment of 1 July 2008, application no. 58243/00. Interception by the Ministry of Defence of the external communications of civil-liberties organisations.	116
Eur. Court of HR, <i>Lordachi and others v. Moldova</i> , judgment of 14 September 2009, application no. 25198/02. Respect for private life Status of potential victims; lack of clarity or adequate safeguards in legislation on interception of communications: violation.	130
Eur. Court of HR, <i>Kennedy v. The United Kingdom</i> , judgment of 18 May 2010, application no. 26839/05. The applicant complains under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence), Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial) and Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) about the alleged interception of his communications, the unfair hearing before the IPT, and having been denied an effective remedy.	140

- Eur. Court of HR, Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova v. Portugal, judgment of 1 December 2015, application no. 69436/10. The case concerned access to the bank accounts of a lawyer charged with tax fraud. The Court found that consultation of the lawyer’s bank statements had amounted to an interference with her right to respect for professional confidentiality, which fell within the scope of private life. 195
- Eur. Court of HR, Figueiredo Teixeira v. Andorra, judgment of 8 November 2016, application no. 72384/14. The case concerned the storage and communication to the judicial authority of data from telephone calls made by the applicant, who was suspected of the serious offence of drug trafficking. The Court found in particular that since the impugned interference was prescribed in national law, a person holding a prepaid mobile phone card could reasonably have expected those provisions to be applied in his case. Furthermore, the criminal procedure provided a wide range of safeguards against arbitrary actions. Hence, no violation of Article 8 was found. 223
- Eur. Court of HR, Terrazzoni v. France, judgment of 29 June 2017, application no. 33242/12. The case concerned the use, in the context of disciplinary proceedings against a judge, of the transcript of a telephone conversation that had been intercepted by chance in criminal proceedings in which the judge had not been involved. The Court found no violation of Article 8, as the interference complained of had been in accordance with the law and had been aimed at establishing the truth both in relation to the initial criminal proceedings against F.L. and in relation to the ancillary criminal proceedings concerning the judge. The Court concluded that there had been effective scrutiny capable of limiting the interference in question to what was necessary in a democratic society. 241
- Eur. Court of HR, Mustafa Sezgin Tanrikulu v Turkey, judgment of 18 July 2017, application no. 27473/06. The applicant complained that the Turkish Court’s decision authorising the interception of his communications had been unlawful and in violation of Article 8 of the Convention because of its indiscriminate nature. The Court found a violation of Article 8. 243
- Eur Court of HR, Big Brother Watch v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 13 September 2018, applications nos. 58170/13, 62322/14 and 24960/15, concerned complaints by journalists and rights organisations about three different surveillance regimes: (1) the bulk interception of communications; (2) intelligence sharing with foreign governments; and (3) the obtaining of communications data from communications service providers. The bulk interception regime violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to respect for private and family life/communications) as there was insufficient oversight both of the selection of Internet bearers for interception and the filtering, search and selection of intercepted communications for examination, and the safeguards governing the selection of “related communications data” for examination were inadequate. In reaching this conclusion, the Court found that the operation of a bulk interception regime did not in and of itself violate the Convention, but noted that such a regime had to respect criteria set down in its case-law. 261
- Eur. Court of HR, Hambardzumyan v. Arménia, judgment of 5 December 2019, application no. 43478/11. The case concerned the applicant’s complaint that the police had not had a valid court warrant to place her under secret surveillance during a criminal investigation. The Court concluded that the warrant had not listed the specific measures that were to be carried out against the applicant. Overall, the surveillance measure had not had sufficient judicial supervision and had been in conflict with the Convention. 287

Eur. Court of HR, Vasil Vasilev v. Bulgaria, judgment of 16 November 2021, application No 7610/15. The case concerns the interception, recording and transcription of a telephone conversation in 2010 between the applicant and one of his clients, a former Minister of Defence, who was being covertly monitored in connection with a criminal case. Mr Vasilev complained to the prosecuting authorities and brought a claim for damages, arguing that the conversation was covered by lawyer-client privilege and that its recording and transcript should have been destroyed. 331

Eur. Court of HR, Nuh Uzun v. Turkey, judgment of 29 May 2022, application no 49341/18. The case mainly concerned the uploading of the applicants' correspondence, while they were in detention, onto the National Judicial Network Server (Ulusal Yargı Ağı Bilişim Sistemi – "UYAP"). The Court found that the uploading of the correspondence of remand and convicted prisoners onto the UYAP server stemmed directly and specifically from an instruction issued by the Ministry of Justice on 10 October 2016 and reissued on 1 March 2017. It noted that the instruction had been addressed to the public prosecutors and prison authorities. The documents in question were therefore unpublished internal documents which as a matter of principle did not have binding force. In the Court's view, texts of this kind, which were not issued under any rule-making powers, could not be regarded as "law" of sufficient "quality" for the purposes of the Court's case-law. Consequently, the interference with the applicants' right to respect for their private life and correspondence could not be said to have been "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of Article 8 of the Convention. 346

### **Photos**

Eur. Court of HR, Von Hannover v. Germany, judgment of 24 June 2004, application no. 59320/00. Applicant complained about obligation of states to protect an individual's image, even for photos taken of public figures in public spaces. 96

Eur. Court of HR, Sciacca v. Italy, judgment of 11 January 2005, application no. 50774/99. The applicant submits that the dissemination of the photograph at a press conference organised by the public prosecutor's office and the tax inspectors infringed her right to respect for her private life. 97

Eur. Court of HR, Gaughran v. United Kingdom, judgment of 13 February 2020, application no. 45245/15. The case concerned a complaint about the indefinite retention of personal data (DNA profile, fingerprints and photograph) of a man who had a spent conviction for driving with excess alcohol in Northern Ireland. , the Court considered that the retention of the applicant's data had failed to strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests. 295

### **Private life at work**

Eur. Court of HR, Bărbulescu v. Romania, judgment of 5 September 2017, application no. 61496/08. The case concerned the decision of a private company to dismiss an employee after monitoring his electronic communications and accessing their contents, and the alleged failure of the domestic courts to protect his right to respect for his private life and correspondence. The Court concluded that the national authorities had not adequately protected Mr Bărbulescu's right to respect for his private life and correspondence. They had consequently failed to strike a fair balance between the interests at stake. 246

Eur. Court of HR, Libert v. France, judgment of 22 February 2018, application no. 588/13. The case concerned the dismissal of an SNCF (French national railway company) employee after the seizure of his work computer had revealed the storage of pornographic files and forged certificates drawn up for third persons. 116

Eur. Court of HR, Vincent Del Campo v. Spain, judgment of 6 November 2018, application no. 25527/13. The case concerned a domestic judgement which named Mr Vincent Del Campo as having harassed a work colleague, although the defendant in the case was actually his local authority employer: violation of Article 8. 259

Eur. Court of HR, López Ribalda and Others v. Spain, judgment of 17 October 2019, application nos. 1874/13 and 8567/13. The case concerned the decision of a private company to dismiss five employees after monitoring them with both visible and hidden surveillance cameras. The employees were not informed of the hidden cameras and had been caught on video helping co-workers and customers steal items and stealing them themselves. 285

### **Processing of Personal Data by the Police**

Eur. Court of HR, Perry v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 17 July 2003, application no. 63737/00 (violation of Article 8 of the Convention). Use of videotape by the Police for identification and prosecution purposes. 94

Eur. Court of HR, Matheron v. France, judgment of 29 March 2005, application no. 57752/00. The applicant complains under Article 8 of the Convention (right to respect for his private life) that evidence was used against him that had been obtained by telephone tapping in separate proceedings. Not being a party to those proceedings, he had been unable to contest their validity. 100

Eur. Court of HR, Turek v. Slovakia, judgment of 14 February 2006, application no. 57986/00. The applicant complains about being registered as a collaborator with the former Czechoslovak Communist Security Agency, the issuing of a security clearance to that effect and the dismissal of his action challenging that registration. 104

Eur. Court of HR, Segerstedt-Wiberg and Others v. Sweden, judgment of 6 June 2006, application no 62332/00. The applicants complain about the storage of certain information about them in Swedish Security Police files and the refusal to reveal the extent of the information stored. 106

Eur. Court of HR, Cemalettin Canlı v. Turkey, judgment of 18 November 2008, application no. 22427/04. The applicant complained that the records kept by the police and the publication in the national press of the details of those records had had adverse effects on his private life within the meaning of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life). He further relied on Article 6 § 2 (presumption of innocence) and Article 13 (right to an effective remedy). 118

Eur. Court of HR, S. and Marper v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 4 December 2008, applications nos. 30562/04 and 30566/04. The applicants complain under Articles 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the Convention about the retention by the authorities of their fingerprints, cellular samples and DNA profiles after their acquittal or discharge. 120

Eur. Court of HR, B.B. v. France, Gardel v. France, M.B. v. France, judgments of 17 December 2009, applications nos. 5335/06, 16428/05, 22115/06. The applicants complain under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights about their inclusion in the Sex Offender Database and the retroactive application of the legislation under which it was created.	134
Eur. Court of HR, Mikolajová v. Slovakia, judgment of 18 January 2011, application no 4479/03. Disclosure of police decision stating that the applicant had committed an offence, even though no criminal proceedings were ever brought.	144
Eur. Court of HR, Shimovolos v. Russia, judgment of 21 June 2011, application no. 30194/09. Applicant complained about police listing and surveillance on his account of membership in a human rights organisation.	151
Eur. Court of HR, Khelili v. Switzerland, judgment of 18 October 2011, application no. 16188/07. A French woman classified as a “prostitute” for fifteen years in Geneva police database violated her right to respect for private life.	154
Eur. Court of HR. M.M. v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 13 November 2012, application no. 24029/07. The applicant complained about retention of caution on criminal record for life. The Court ruled that the retention and disclosure of the applicant’s caution data accordingly could not be regarded as having been in accordance with the law.	166
Eur. Court of HR. Brunet v France, judgment of 18 September 2014, application no. 21010/10. The applicant complained about his registration in a recorded offences database after criminal proceedings against him were discontinued. The prosecutor rejected definitively the applicant’s demand of removal arguing that the law doesn’t allow him to. The applicant couldn’t reach a real opportunity to ask the removal of his data. The retention could be regarded as a disproportionate breach of the applicant’s right to respect for his private life and was not necessary in a democratic society. The State had overstepped its discretion to decide and thus violated Article 8.	180
Eur. Court of HR. Case of Zaichenko v. Ukraine, judgment of 26 February 2015, application no. 45797/09.. The applicant complained about his involuntary psychiatric confinement and the unlawful collection of information about him by the police in that context. The Court concluded a violation of Article 8.	186
Eur. Court of HR, Trabajo Rueda v. Spain, judgment of 30 May 2017, application no. 32600/12. The applicant complained that the police seizure and inspection of his computer had amounted to an interference with his right to respect for his private life and correspondence. The Court deemed that the police seizure of the computer and inspection of the files which it contained, without prior judicial authorisation, had not been proportionate to the legitimate aims pursued and had not been “necessary in a democratic society”.	232

<p>Eur. Court of HR, <i>Benedik v. Slovenia</i>, judgment of 24 April 2018, application no. 588/13. The case concerned the Slovenian police's failure to obtain a court order to access subscriber information associated with a dynamic IP address recorded by the Swiss law-enforcement authorities during their monitoring of users of a certain file-sharing network. This led to the applicant being identified after he had shared files over the network, including child pornography. The Court found in particular that the legal provision used by the police to obtain the subscriber information associated with the dynamic IP address had not met the Convention standard of being "in accordance with the law". The provision had lacked clarity, offered virtually no protection from arbitrary interference, had no safeguards against abuse and no independent supervision of the police powers involved. It stated that a finding of a violation of Mr Benedik's rights under the Convention was sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage.</p>	225
<p>Eur. Court of HR, <i>Aliyev v. Azerbaijan</i>, judgment of 20 September 2018, application no. 68762/14. The case concerned the detention of a lawyer and human rights activist on charges including illegal entrepreneurship, embezzlement and tax evasion.</p>	264
<p>Eur. Court of HR, <i>Catt v. United Kingdom</i>, judgement of 24 January 2019, application no. 43514/15. The case concerned the applicant's complaint about the collection and retention of his personal data in a police database for "domestic extremists". The Court found in particular that the data held on the applicant concerned his political views and that such information required particular protection. The Court also had regard to Mr Catt's age, (he is now 94), and the fact he had no history or prospect of committing acts of violence. While collecting the information on him had been justified, retaining it had not, particularly owing to a lack of safeguards, such as time-limits. There had therefore been a violation of the Convention.</p>	270
<p>Eur. Court of HR, <i>Beghal v. the United Kingdom</i>, judgment of 28 February 2019, application no. 4755/16. Power of border control officials to stop and question without suspicion or access to lawyer: violation of article 8.</p>	273
<p>Eur. Court of HR, <i>Visy v. Slovakia</i>, judgment of 18 March 2019, application no. 70288/13. Re-seizure of unlawfully seized materials five minutes after their restitution. Violation of Article 8, as the re-seized materials contained business-related information and included legal advice protected by lawyer-client privilege. As the domestic authorities had failed to provide relevant and sufficient reasons for dismissing the applicant's complaints in relation to the re-seizure, in which respect he had not had the benefit of effective safeguards against arbitrariness and abuse, the re-seizure could not be seen as having been proportionate to the legitimate aim it pursued, and thus necessary in a democratic society.</p>	275
<p>Eur. Court of HR, <i>Gaughran v. United Kingdom</i>, judgment of 13 February 2020, application no. 45245/15. The case concerned a complaint about the indefinite retention of personal data (DNA profile, fingerprints and photograph) of a man who had a spent conviction for driving with excess alcohol in Northern Ireland. , the Court considered that the retention of the applicant's data had failed to strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests.</p>	295
<p>Eur. Court of HR, <i>Z. v. Bulgaria</i>, judgement of 28 May 2020, application no. 39257/17. The case concerned the applicant's complaint of an ineffective official response to her allegation that she had been raped.</p>	301
<p>Eur. Court of HR, <i>P.N. v. Germany</i>, judgement of 11 June 2020, application no. 74440/17. The case concerned a police order to collect information to identify the applicant, such as photographs of his face and body, including possible tattoos, as well as finger and palm prints.</p>	303

Eur. Court of HR, Pormes v. the Netherlands, judgement of 28 July 2020, application number 25402/14. The case concerned the applicant's complaint about the Dutch authorities' refusal to grant him a residence permit, despite him living in the Netherlands since he was almost four years' old. 316

Eur Court of HR, M.D. and Others v. Spain, judgment of 28 June 2022, application no. 36584/17. 354  
The case concerned the compiling of files by the police in Catalonia on judges who had expressed certain views on that region's independence from Spain. Material from the files, including photographs, had been subsequently leaked to the press. The Court found in particular that the mere existence of the police reports, which had not been compiled in accordance with any law, had contravened the Convention. As for the investigation into the leak, the Court found it to have been inadequate owing to the failure to interview a person crucial to the investigation, the Senior Chief of Police of Barcelona. The Court consequently decided on a violation of Article 8 ECHR.

### **Surveillance Methods**

Eur. Court of HR, Klass and others v. Germany, judgment of 6 September 1978, application no. 5029/71. Law authorising secret services to carry out secret monitoring of communications (postal and telephone). 44

Eur. Court of HR, Rotaru v. Romania, judgment of 4 May 2000, application no. 28341/95. The 78  
applicant complained of an infringement of his right to private life in that the Romanian Intelligence Service held a file containing information on his private life and that it was impossible to refute the untrue information.

Eur. Court of HR, P.G. and J.H. v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 25 September 2001, 81  
application no. 44787/98. The applicants complained about the use of covert listening devices to monitor and record their conversations at B's flat, the monitoring of calls from B's telephone and the use of listening devices to obtain voice samples while they were at the police station.

Eur. Court of HR, Taylor-Sabori v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 22 October 2002, no. 47114/99. The applicant complained about the interception of pager messages by the police and 85  
subsequent reference to them at the trial.

Eur. Court of HR, Allan v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 5 November 2002, application no. 48539/99. The applicant complained of use of covert audio and video surveillance within a prison 87  
cell and the prison visiting area.

Eur. Court of HR, Wisse v. France, judgment of 20 December 2005, application no. 71611/01. 103  
The applicants contend that the recording of their conversations in the prison visiting rooms constituted interference with their right to respect for their private and family life.

Eur. Court of HR, Copland v. United Kingdom, judgment of 3 April 2007, application no. 62617/00, Complaint that, during the applicant's employment at the College, her telephone, e- 112  
mail and internet usage had been monitored at the Deputy Principal's instigation.

Eur. Court of HR, Bykov v. Russia, judgment of 10 March 2009, application no. 4378/02. The applicant complains under Article 5 § 3 (right to liberty and security), Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 6 (right to a fair trial) of the European Convention on Human Rights about the insufficient reasons given for extending the applicant's pre-trial detention, the use of a surveillance technique which was not accompanied by adequate safeguards against possible abuses.	124
Eur. Court of HR, Uzun v. Germany, judgment of 2 September 2010, application no. 35623/05. Applicant complained about information obtained on him via GPS surveillance. The Court considered that adequate and effective safeguards against abuse had been in place.	139
Eur. Court of HR. Dragojević v. Croatia, judgment of 15 January 2015, application no. 68955/11,. The case principally concerned the secret surveillance of telephone conversations of a drug trafficking suspect. The Court found in particular that Croatian law, as interpreted by the national courts, did not provide reasonable clarity as to the authorities' discretion in ordering surveillance measures and it did not in practice – as applied in Mr Dragojević's case – provide sufficient safeguards against possible abuse.	182
Eur. Court of HR. R.E v. United Kingdom, judgment of 27 October 2015, application no. 62498/11. Covert surveillance of a detainee's consultations with his lawyer violates Article 8 since these consultations benefit from a strengthened protection. However, consultations with the person appointed to assist the detainee, as a vulnerable person, following his arrest do not benefit from this protection; Article 8 is not violated on this grievance.	193
Eur. Court of HR. Roman Zakharov v. Russia, judgment of 4 December 2015, application no. 47143/06. The applicant is a user of mobile phone complaining of system of secret surveillance without effective domestic remedies. Although the applicant cannot prove that his own conversations have been surveyed, the mere existence of the legislation allowing it restricts the liberty of communicating. The Court concluded that domestic legal provisions governing the interception of communications did not provide adequate and effective guarantees and thus violate Article 8.	200
Eur. Court of HR. Szabó and Vissy v. Hungary, judgment of 12 January 2016, application no. 37138/14. The Court recognised that situations of extreme urgency in the fight against terrorism could arise in which a requirement for prior judicial control would run the risk of losing precious time. However, judges must be able to control surveillance measures post factum. The Court decided that the domestic law did not provide an effective judicial-control mechanism and did not provide sufficiently precise, effective and comprehensive safeguards on the ordering, execution and potential redressing of surveillance measures.	203
Eur. Court of HR, Šantare and Labazņikovs v. Latvia, judgment of 31 March 2016, application no. 34148/07. The applicants complained that covert interception of their mobile phone conversations, which were subsequently used during their trial, had not been carried out in compliance with Article 8 of the Convention. The Court found a violation of Article 8.	208
Eur. Court of HR, Cevat Özel v. Turkey, judgment of 7 June 2016, application no. 19602/06. The applicant complained about the surveillance of his communications and the absence of notification. The Court recognised that the measures of surveillance could be lawful but the absence of notification impeded the applicant to ensure his rights. The Court thus concluded the violation of Article 8.	210

- Eur. Court of HR, *Karabeyoğlu v. Turkey*, judgment of 7 June 2016, application no. 30083/10. 213  
 The applicant alleged that the monitoring of his communications and those of his wife and two children had been arbitrary and illegal, that his professional and personal reputation had been damaged as a result, and complained that he and his family had been denied the right of access to a court because of the failure of the Ministry of Justice to send him the documents concerning the phone-tapping operations. The Court found no violation of Article 8 as regards the telephone tapping in connection with the criminal investigation, but found a violation as regards the use in disciplinary proceedings of the information obtained by means of telephone tapping, and of Article 13 (right to effective remedy).
- Eur. Court of HR, *Versini-Campinchi and Crasnianski v. France*, judgment of 16 June 2016, application no. 49176/11. 216  
 The case concerned the interception, transcription and use in disciplinary proceedings against her of conversations which the applicant, who is a lawyer, had had with one of her clients. The Court held that as the transcription of the conversation between the applicant and her client had been based on the fact that the contents could give rise to the presumption that the applicant had herself committed an offence, and the domestic courts had satisfied themselves that the transcription did not infringe her client's rights of defence, the fact that the former was the latter's lawyer did not suffice to constitute a violation of Article 8 of the Convention in the applicant's regard.
- Eur. Court of HR, *Vukota-Bojić v. Switzerland*, judgment of 18 October 2016, application no. 61838/10. 219  
 The applicant complained that the surveillance by the insurance company had been in breach of her right to respect for private life, and that it should not have been admitted in the proceedings that resulted in the reduction of her disability pension. The Court held that the secret surveillance ordered had interfered with the applicant's private life. However, the surveillance had not been prescribed by law, it had failed to regulate with clarity when and for how long surveillance could be conducted, and how data obtained by surveillance should be stored and accessed. There had therefore been a violation of Article 8.
- Eur. Court of HR, *Bašić v Croatia*, judgment of 25 October 2016, application no. 22251/13. 221  
 The applicant complained that the secret surveillance of his telephone conversations, subsequently used as evidence during his trial, had been in violation of the guarantees of Articles 8 and 6 § 1 of the Convention. The Court found a violation of Article 8.
- Eur. Court of HR, *Matanović v. Croatia*, judgment of 4 April 2017, application no. 2742/12. 229  
 The case concerned a complaint about entrapment, secret surveillance measures and the non-disclosure and use of the evidence thus obtained. Mr Matanović, the applicant, was convicted of corruption in 2009. His conviction was essentially based on evidence obtained via telephone tapping following a covert operation involving an informant. The Court found that there had been no violation of Article 6 § 1 as concerned Mr Matanović's complaint of entrapment, a violation of the same Article with as concerned the non-disclosure of certain evidence in the criminal proceedings against Mr Matanović, and a violation of Article 8 because the procedure for ordering and supervising the tapping of Mr Matanović's telephone had not been lawful.
- Eur. Court of HR, *Ben Faiza v. France*, judgment of 08 February 2018, application no. 31446/12. 250  
 The case concerns surveillance measures taken against Mohamed Ben Faiza (geolocation of his vehicle and court order for telephone operator's records) in a criminal investigation into his involvement in drug-trafficking offences.

Eur. Court of HR, Centrum FÖR RÄTTVISA v. SWEDEN, judgment of 19 June 2018, application no. 35252/08. The case concerned a complaint brought by a public interest law firm alleging that legislation permitting the bulk interception of electronic signals in Sweden for foreign intelligence purposes breached its privacy rights. 257

Eur. Court of HR, Hambarzumyan v. Arménia, judgment of 5 December 2019, application no. 43478/11. The case concerned the applicant's complaint that the police had not had a valid court warrant to place her under secret surveillance during a criminal investigation. The Court concluded that the warrant had not listed the specific measures that were to be carried out against the applicant. Overall, the surveillance measure had not had sufficient judicial supervision and had been in conflict with the Convention. 287

Eur. Court of HR, Ekimdzhev and Others v. Bulgaria, judgment of 11 January 2022, application no. 70078/12. The case concerned secret surveillance and the system of retention and subsequent accessing of communications data in Bulgaria. The Court found a violation of Article 8 in respect of secret surveillance and a violation of Article 8 in respect of retention and accessing of communication data. 339

Eur Court of HR, Haščák v. Slovakia, judgment of 23 June 2022, application nos: 58359/12, 27787/16 and 67667/16. The case concerned a surveillance operation ("the Gorilla operation") carried out in 2005 and 2006 by the Slovak Intelligence Service and the intelligence material obtained by it. The Court, citing its findings in substantially the same situation of the applicant in Zoltán Varga v. Slovakia, highlighted the deficiencies in the applicable rules and procedures and the lack of external oversight of both the SIS operation and the retention by the SIS of some of the resulting data, and found that both had thus not been in accordance with the law for the Convention purposes. 351

### **Video Surveillance**

Eur. Court of HR, Allan v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 5 November 2002, application no. 48539/99. The applicant complained of use of covert audio and video surveillance within a prison cell and the prison visiting area. 87

Eur. Court HR, Köpke v. Germany, judgment of 5 October 2010, application no 420/07. Case concerning video surveillance of supermarket cashier suspected of theft declared inadmissible. Eur. Court of HR, Antović and Mirković v. Montenegro, judgment of 28 November 2017, application no. 70838/13. The case concerned an invasion of privacy complaint by two professors at University of Montenegro's School of Mathematics, after video surveillance had been installed in areas where they taught. The domestic courts rejected a compensation claim, finding that the question of private life had not been at issue as the auditoriums where the two professors taught were public areas and that the data collected by the video surveillance was also thus not personal data. The Court found that the camera surveillance had not been in accordance with the law and that there had been a violation of Article 8. 142

Eur. Court of HR, Antović and Mirković v. Montenegro, judgment of 28 November 2017, application no. 70838/13. The case concerned an invasion of privacy complaint by two professors at University of Montenegro's School of Mathematics, after video surveillance had been installed in areas where they taught. The domestic courts rejected a compensation claim, finding that the question of private life had not been at issue as the auditoriums where the two professors taught were public areas and that the data collected by the video surveillance was also thus not personal data. The Court found that the camera surveillance had not been in accordance with the law and that there had been a violation of Article 8. 249

Eur. Court of HR, López Ribalda and Others v. Spain, judgment of 17 October 2019, application nos. 1874/13 and 8567/13. The case concerned the decision of a private company to dismiss five employees after monitoring them with both visible and hidden surveillance cameras. The employees were not informed of the hidden cameras and had been caught on video helping co-workers and customers steal items and stealing them themselves. The Court concluded that the domestic courts had not exceeded their power of discretion ("margin of appreciation") in finding the monitoring proportionate and legitimate. 285

Eur. Court of HR, Izmaystev v. Russia, judgment of 27 August 2019, application no.74141/10. The case concerned video surveillance of offenders serving a sentence of imprisonment. 280

### **Key Article 8 Case-Law**

Eur. Court of HR, M.A. v. Denmark, judgment of 9 July 2021, application no 6697/18. The case concerned a delay of three years imposed in 2016 pursuant to Danish law on the applicant's right to family reunification owing to his temporary protection status. The Court found in particular that, given the lack of an individualised assessment of the applicant's case and the length of the wait to be able to avail of his right to family reunification, the authorities had failed to strike a fair balance between the needs of the applicant individually and the economic well-being of the country in their assessment of his application to be reunited with his wife. 323

Eur. Court of HR, Polat v. Austria, judgment of 20 July 2021, application no 12886/16. The case concerned a post-mortem examination of the applicant's son carried out against her will. The Court found in particular that the Austrian authorities had failed to balance the needs of science and the protection of public health against the applicant's rights in carrying out the post-mortem against her will and against her religious convictions, and examining the issue later in the courts. It also found that the failure to disclose to the applicant information regarding the extent of the examination given her specific circumstances had been a violation of her rights. 326

Eur Court of HR, Gumenyuk and others v. Ukraine, judgment of 22 July 2021, application no 11423/19. The case concerned judges of the former Supreme Court of Ukraine who were prevented from exercising their functions, without having ever been formally dismissed, because of judicial reform and legislative amendments that took place in 2016. The Court found that the right of access to a court was a fundamental procedural right for the protection of members of the judiciary, and the applicants should, in principle, have been able to go to court with their allegations. In addition, the Court considered that being prevented from exercising as Supreme Court judges since December 2017, despite a Constitutional Court ruling in their favour, had significantly affected their private lives and constituted an interference with their right to respect for private life. 328

- Eur. Court of HR, *Abdi Ibrahim v. Norway*, judgment of 10 December 2021, application no 15379/16. The case concerned the decision by the Norwegian authorities to allow the adoption of a child by a foster family against his mother's wishes. The mother, a Somali national who had moved to Norway, did not ask for her son's return as he had spent a long time with his foster parents, but wished for him to maintain his cultural and religious roots. The Court decided to examine the applicant's wish to have her son brought up in line with her Muslim faith as an integral part of her complaint under Article 8, as interpreted and applied in the light of Article 9 (freedom of religion). Indeed, there had been shortcomings in the overall decision-making process leading to the adoption, which had not given sufficient weight to the mother and child's mutual interest in maintaining ties. 336
- Eur. Court of HR, *OOO Memo v. Russia*, judgment of 15 March 2022, application no 2840/10. The case concerned a civil defamation suit brought by the Volgograd Region Authority against a media company which OOO Memo owned. The Court found in particular that although civil defamation proceedings were open to private or public companies to protect their reputation in the marketplace, this could not be the case for a large, taxpayer-funded, executive body like the plaintiff in this case. The proceedings and the consequent interference had therefore not had a "legitimate aim" under the Convention. The European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights. 341
- Eur. Court of HR, *C.E. and Others v. France*, judgment of 24 March 2022, application nos. 29775/18 and 29693/19. The judgment concerned two cases. The first related to the rejection by the domestic courts of an application for full adoption of a child, made by the biological mother's former partner. The second concerned the domestic courts' refusal to issue a document attesting to a matter of common knowledge (*acte de notoriété*) recognising a legal parent-child relationship, on the basis of *de facto* enjoyment of status (*possession d'état*), between a child and the biological mother's former partner. The European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been: no violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights. 343

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80. Eur. Court of HR. *Case of M.N. and Others v. San Marino*, judgement of 7 July 2015, application no. 28005/12. The applicants complained about the decision ordering the seizure of banking documents relating to them, alleging that they did not have effective access to court to complain about it and that it interfered with their private life and correspondence..... 187

81. Eur. Court of HR. *Case of Sõro v. Estonia*, judgment of 3 September 2015, application no. 22588/08. The applicant alleged that the publication, thirteen years after the restoration of Estonian independence, of information about his service in the former State security organisations (KGB) had violated his right to respect for his private life. The Court rules that such a passage of time must have decreased any threat the applicant could have initially posed to the new democratic system. The Court concluded that the applicant's right to respect for his private life was subject to a disproportionate interference..... 189

82. Eur. Court of HR. *Bremner v. Turkey*, judgment of 13 October 2015, application no. 37428/06. Television broadcast showing non-blurred images of an individual obtained using a hidden camera while meeting someone to offer free Christian literature wasn't justified by general-interest. The State overpassed its margin of appreciation and violated Article 8. .... 191

83. Eur. Court of HR. *R.E v. United Kingdom*, judgment of 27 October 2015, application no. 62498/11. Covert surveillance of a detainee's consultations with his lawyer violates Article 8 since these consultations benefit from a strengthened protection. However, consultations with the person appointed to assist the detainee, as a vulnerable person, following his arrest do not benefit from this protection; Article 8 is not violated on this grievance. .... 193

84. Eur. Court of HR, *Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova v. Portugal*, judgment of 1 December 2015, application no. 69436/10. The case concerned access to the bank accounts of a lawyer charged with tax fraud. The Court

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85. Eur. Court of HR, *G.S.B. v. Switzerland*, judgment of 22 December 2015, application no. 28601/11. The case concerned the transmission to the US tax authorities of the applicant's bank account details in connection with an administrative cooperation agreement between Switzerland and the USA. The Court noted that the applicant had had access to several effective and genuine procedural safeguards in order to contest the transmission of his bank details and to secure protection against arbitrary implementation of agreements concluded between Switzerland and the US. .... 197

86. Eur. Court of HR. *Roman Zakharov v. Russia*, judgment of 4 December 2015, application no. 47143/06. The applicant is a user of mobile phone complaining of system of secret surveillance without effective domestic remedies. Although the applicant cannot prove that his own conversations have been surveyed, the mere existence of the legislation allowing it restricts the liberty of communicating. The Court concluded that domestic legal provisions governing the interception of communications did not provide adequate and effective guarantees and thus violate Article 8 ..... 200

87. Eur. Court of HR. *Szabó and Vissy v. Hungary*, judgment of 12 January 2016, application no. 37138/14. The Court recognised that situations of extreme urgency in the fight against terrorism could arise in which a requirement for prior judicial control would run the risk of losing precious time. However, judges must be able to control surveillance measures post factum. The Court decided that the domestic law did not provide an effective judicial-control mechanism and did not provide sufficiently precise, effective and comprehensive safeguards on the ordering, execution and potential redressing of surveillance measures. .... 203

88. Eur. Court of HR, *Y.Y. v. Russia*, judgment of 23 February 2016, application no. 40378/06. The applicant complained that the St Petersburg Committee for Healthcare had collected and examined her medical records and those of her children and forwarded its report containing the results of its examination, to the Ministry of Healthcare without her consent. The Court found a violation of Article 8 because the actions in dispute did not constitute a foreseeable application of the relevant Russian law. .... 206

89. Eur. Court of HR, *Šantare and Labazņikovs v. Latvia*, judgment of 31 March 2016, application no. 34148/07. The applicants complained that covert interception of their mobile phone conversations, which were subsequently used during their trial, had not been carried out in compliance with Article 8 of the Convention. The Court found a violation of Article 8. .... 208

90. Eur. Court of HR, *Cevat Özel v. Turkey*, judgment of 7 June 2016, application no. 19602/06. The applicant complained about the surveillance of his communications and the absence of notification. The Court recognised that the measures of surveillance could be lawful but the absence of notification impeded the applicant to ensure his rights. The Court thus concluded the violation of Article 8. .... 210

91. Eur. Court of HR, *Karabeyoğlu v. Turkey*, judgment of 7 June 2016, application no. 30083/10. The applicant alleged that the monitoring of his communications and those of his wife and two children had been arbitrary and illegal, that his professional and personal reputation had been damaged as a result, and complained that he and his family had been denied the right of access to a court because of the failure of the Ministry of Justice to send him the documents concerning the phone-tapping operations. The Court found no violation of Article 8 as regards the telephone tapping in connection with the criminal investigation, but found a violation as regards the use in disciplinary proceedings of the information obtained by means of telephone tapping, and of Article 13 (right to effective remedy). .... 213

92. Eur. Court of HR, *Versini-Campinchi and Crasnianski v. France*, judgment of 16 June 2016, application no. 49176/11. The case concerned the interception, transcription and use in disciplinary proceedings against her of conversations which the applicant, who is a lawyer, had had with one of her clients. The Court held that as the transcription of the conversation between the applicant and her client had been based on the fact that the contents could give rise to the presumption that the applicant had herself committed an offence, and the domestic courts had satisfied themselves that the transcription did not infringe her client's rights of defence, the fact that

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93. Eur. Court of HR, Vukota-Bojić v. Switzerland, judgment of 18 October 2016, application no. 61838/10. The applicant complained that the surveillance by the insurance company had been in breach of her right to respect for private life, and that it should not have been admitted in the proceedings that resulted in the reduction of her disability pension. The Court held that the secret surveillance ordered had interfered with the applicant's private life. However, the surveillance had not been prescribed by law, it had failed to regulate with clarity when and for how long surveillance could be conducted, and how data obtained by surveillance should be stored and accessed. There had therefore been a violation of Article 8. .... 219

94. Eur. Court of HR, Bašić v Croatia, judgment of 25 October 2016, application no. 22251/13. The applicant complained that the secret surveillance of his telephone conversations, subsequently used as evidence during his trial, had been in violation of the guarantees of Articles 8 and 6 § 1 of the Convention. The Court found a violation of Article 8. .... 221

95. Eur. Court of HR, Figueiredo Teixeira v. Andorra, judgment of 8 November 2016, application no. 72384/14. The case concerned the storage and communication to the judicial authority of data from telephone calls made by the applicant, who was suspected of the serious offence of drug trafficking. The Court found in particular that since the impugned interference was prescribed in national law, a person holding a prepaid mobile phone card could reasonably have expected those provisions to be applied in his case. Furthermore, the criminal procedure provided a wide range of safeguards against arbitrary actions. Hence, no violation of Article 8 was found.. 223

96. Eur. Court of HR, Surikov v. Ukraine, judgment of 26 January 2017, application no. 42788/06. The applicant complained that his employer had arbitrarily collected, retained, and used sensitive, obsolete and irrelevant data concerning his mental health in considering his application for promotion, and had unlawfully and unfairly disclosed this data to the applicant's colleagues and to a civil court during a public hearing. The Court found a violation of Article 8. .... 225

97. Eur. Court of HR, Matanović v. Croatia, judgment of 4 April 2017, application no. 2742/12. The case concerned a complaint about entrapment, secret surveillance measures and the non-disclosure and use of the evidence thus obtained. Mr Matanović, the applicant, was convicted of corruption in 2009. His conviction was essentially based on evidence obtained via telephone tapping following a covert operation involving an informant. The Court found that there had been no violation of Article 6 § 1 as concerned Mr Matanović's complaint of entrapment, a violation of the same Article with as concerned the non-disclosure of certain evidence in the criminal proceedings against Mr Matanović, and a violation of Article 8 because the procedure for ordering and supervising the tapping of Mr Matanović's telephone had not been lawful..... 229

98. Eur. Court of HR, Trabajo Rueda v. Spain, judgment of 30 May 2017, application no. 32600/12. The applicant complained that the police seizure and inspection of his computer had amounted to an interference with his right to respect for his private life and correspondence. The Court deemed that the police seizure of the computer and inspection of the files which it contained, without prior judicial authorisation, had not been proportionate to the legitimate aims pursued and had not been "necessary in a democratic society". .... 232

99. Eur. Court of HR, Bogomolova v. Russia, judgment of 20 June 2017, application no. 13812/09. The case concerned the use of a minor's image without parental authorisation. The Court found a violation of Article 8, stating in particular that the domestic courts had failed to examine whether the applicant had given her consent for the publication of the photograph, focusing instead on the authorisation she had given that her son be photographed. The Court also highlighted the false impressions and inferences which could be drawn from the context of the photograph. .... 233

100. Eur. Court of HR, Aycaguer v France, judgment of 22 June 2017, application no. 8806/12. The case concerned the applicant's refusal to undergo biological testing, the result of which was to be included in the national computerised DNA database (FNAEG). The Court found a violation of Article 8, noting that no appropriate action had been taken on the reservation by the Constitutional Court regarding the constitutionality

of FNAEG and that there was no provision for differentiating the period of storage depending on the nature and gravity of the offences committed. Secondly, the Court ruled that the regulations on the storage of DNA profiles in the FNAEG did not provide the data subjects with sufficient protection. .... 235

101. Eur. Court of HR, *Dagregorio and Mosconi v. France*, judgment of 22 June 2017, application no. 65714/11. The applicants considered that their conviction for refusing to undergo biological testing amounted to a disproportionate interference with their right to respect for their private life and their physical integrity. Relying on Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) read in conjunction with Article 8, they alleged discrimination, emphasising that only individuals suspected or convicted of a certain category of criminal offence were subject to biological testing. Under Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association), they alleged that there has been a violation of their trade-union freedom. Lastly, under Article 14 in conjunction with Article 11, they submitted that the authorities should not have treated them in the same way as the persons targeted by the legislature when the FNAEG had been set up. The Court unanimously declared the application inadmissible..... 237

102. Eur. Court of HR, *Satakunnan Markkinapörssi Oy and Satamedia Oy v. Finland*, judgment of 27 June 2017, application no. 931/13. After two companies had published the personal tax information of 1.2 million people, the domestic authorities ruled that such wholesale publication of personal data had been unlawful under data protection laws, and barred such mass publications in future. The companies complained to the European Court of Human Rights that the ban had violated their right to freedom of expression. The Court held that the ban had interfered with the companies' freedom of expression. However, it had not violated Article 10 because it had been in accordance with the law, it had pursued the legitimate aim of protecting individuals' privacy, and it had struck a fair balance between the right to privacy and the right to freedom of expression. However, the Court did find a violation of Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing within a reasonable time), due to the excessive length of the proceedings..... 239

103. Eur. Court of HR, *Terrazoni v. France*, judgment of 29 June 2017, application no. 33242/12. The case concerned the use, in the context of disciplinary proceedings against a judge, of the transcript of a telephone conversation that had been intercepted by chance in criminal proceedings in which the judge had not been involved. The Court found no violation of Article 8, as the interference complained of had been in accordance with the law and had been aimed at establishing the truth both in relation to the initial criminal proceedings against F.L. and in relation to the ancillary criminal proceedings concerning the judge. The Court concluded that there had been effective scrutiny capable of limiting the interference in question to what was necessary in a democratic society. .... 241

104. Eur. Court of HR, *Mustafa Sezgin Tanrikulu v Turkey*, judgment of 18 July 2017, application no. 27473/06. The applicant complained that the Turkish Court's decision authorising the interception of his communications had been unlawful and in violation of Article 8 of the Convention because of its indiscriminate nature. The Court found a violation of Article 8. .... 243

105. Eur. Court of HR, *Bărbulescu v. Romania*, judgment of 5 September 2017, application no. 61496/08. The case concerned the decision of a private company to dismiss an employee after monitoring his electronic communications and accessing their contents, and the alleged failure of the domestic courts to protect his right to respect for his private life and correspondence. The Court concluded that the national authorities had not adequately protected Mr Bărbulescu's right to respect for his private life and correspondence. They had consequently failed to strike a fair balance between the interests at stake. .... 246

106. Eur. Court of HR, *Antović and Mirković v. Montenegro*, judgment of 28 November 2017, application no. 70838/13. The case concerned an invasion of privacy complaint by two professors at University of Montenegro's School of Mathematics, after video surveillance had been installed in areas where they taught. The domestic courts rejected a compensation claim, finding that the question of private life had not been at issue as the auditoriums where the two professors taught were public areas and that the data collected by the video surveillance was also thus not personal data. The Court found that the camera surveillance had not been in accordance with the law and that there had been a violation of Article 8. .... 249

107. Eur. Court of HR, Ben Faiza v. France, judgment of 08 February 2018, application no. 31446/12. The case concerns surveillance measures taken against Mohamed Ben Faiza (geolocation of his vehicle and court order for telephone operator's records) in a criminal investigation into his involvement in drug-trafficking offences ...  
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108. Eur. Court of HR, Libert v. France, judgment of 22 February 2018, application no. 588/13. The case concerned the dismissal of an SNCF (French national railway company) employee after the seizure of his work computer had revealed the storage of pornographic files and forged certificates drawn up for third persons. .  
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109. Eur. Court of HR, Benedik v. Slovenia, judgment of 24 April 2018, application no. 588/13. The case concerned the Slovenian police's failure to obtain a court order to access subscriber information associated with a dynamic IP address recorded by the Swiss law-enforcement authorities during their monitoring of users of a certain file-sharing network. This led to the applicant being identified after he had shared files over the network, including child pornography. The Court found in particular that the legal provision used by the police to obtain the subscriber information associated with the dynamic IP address had not met the Convention standard of being "in accordance with the law". The provision had lacked clarity, offered virtually no protection from arbitrary interference, had no safeguards against abuse and no independent supervision of the police powers involved. It stated that a finding of a violation of Mr Benedik's rights under the Convention was sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage..... 255
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114. Eur. Court of HR, Khadija Ismayilova v. Azerbaijan, judgment of 10 January 2019, application no. 65286/13. The case concerned an alleged smear campaign against a well-known journalist, Khadija Rovshan qizi Ismayilova. In particular, she was sent a letter threatening her with public humiliation if she did not stop her investigative reporting. When she refused, a "sex video" filmed without her knowledge of her and her then boyfriend was posted on the Internet. Around the same time, newspapers ran stories accusing her of anti-government bias and immoral behaviour. She later discovered hidden cameras all over her flat. The Court took particular note of reports of journalists in Azerbaijan being persecuted and the perceived climate of impunity for such acts. In sum, the Court found that the Azerbaijani authorities had failed to comply with their positive

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115. Eur. Court of HR, X v. 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', judgment of 17 January 2019, application no. 29683/16. The case concerned administrative proceedings in which the applicant, who is transgender, had sought to have the sex/gender marker on the birth certificate changed. Relying in particular on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), X complained of the absence of a regulatory framework for legal gender recognition and the arbitrary imposition of a requirement for genital surgery. Violation of Article 8 - on account of the lack of a regulatory framework ensuring the right to respect for the applicant's private life.269

116. Eur. Court of HR Catt v. United Kingdom, judgement of 24 January 2019, application no. 43514/15. The case concerned the applicant's complaint about the collection and retention of his personal data in a police database for "domestic extremists". The Court found in particular that the data held on the applicant concerned his political views and that such information required particular protection. The Court also had regard to Mr Catt's age, (he is now 94), and the fact he had no history or prospect of committing acts of violence. While collecting the information on him had been justified, retaining it had not, particularly owing to a lack of safeguards, such as time-limits. There had therefore been a violation of the Convention..... 270

117. Eur. Court of HR, Mifsud v. Malta, judgement of 29 January 2019, application no. 62257/15. The case concerned Mr Mifsud's complaint about being ordered by a court to undergo a DNA test in a contested paternity case. The Court found that the domestic courts had fairly balanced Mr Mifsud's rights and those of a woman, X, who was trying to establish that he was her father. In particular, the courts had examined Mr Mifsud's objections to taking the test in a first-instance civil court and at two levels of constitutional jurisdiction, eventually finding against him and ordering the procedure to take place. No violation of Article 8..... 272

118. Eur. Court of HR, Beghal v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 28 February 2019, application no. 4755/16. Power of border control officials to stop and question without suspicion or access to lawyer: violation of article 8. .... 273

119. Eur. Court of HR, Visy v. Slovakia, judgment of 18 March 2019, application no. 70288/13. Re-seizure of unlawfully seized materials five minutes after their restitution. Violation of Article 8, as the re-seized materials contained business-related information and included legal advice protected by lawyer-client privilege. As the domestic authorities had failed to provide relevant and sufficient reasons for dismissing the applicant's complaints in relation to the re-seizure, in which respect he had not had the benefit of effective safeguards against arbitrariness and abuse, the re-seizure could not be seen as having been proportionate to the legitimate aim it pursued, and thus necessary in a democratic society..... 275

120. Eur. Court of HR, Høiness v. Norway, judgement of 19 March 2019, application no. 43624/14. The case concerned the domestic courts' refusal to impose civil liability on an Internet forum host after vulgar comments about Ms Høiness had been posted on the forum. The Court found in particular that the national courts had acted within their discretion ("margin of appreciation") when seeking to establish a balance between Ms Høiness's rights under Article 8 and the opposing right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the news portal and host of the debate forums. .... 277

121. Eur. Court of HR, Širvinskas v. Lithuania, judgement of 23 July 2019, application no. 21243/17. The case concerned court proceedings which had determined a child's temporary and then permanent place of residence in a divorce case. .... 279

122. Eur. Court of HR, Izmestyev v. Russia, judgment of 27 August 2019, application no.74141/10. The case concerned video surveillance of offenders serving a sentence of imprisonment. .... 280

123. Eur. Court of HR, Strand Lobben and others v. Norway, judgement of 10 September 2019, application no. 54646/17 and. 48818/17. The case concerned the removal of a mother's parental authority followed by a decision of adoption of her eldest son. The Grand Chamber concluded that the procedure in question had not

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124. Eur. Court of HR, López Ribalda and Others v. Spain, judgment of 17 October 2019, application nos. 1874/13 and 8567/13. The case concerned the decision of a private company to dismiss five employees after monitoring them with both visible and hidden surveillance cameras. The employees were not informed of the hidden cameras and had been caught on video helping co-workers and customers steal items and stealing them themselves. The Court concluded that the domestic courts had not exceeded their power of discretion (“margin of appreciation”) in finding the monitoring proportionate and legitimate. .... 285

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126. Eur. Court of Hr, Beizaras and Levickas v. Lithuania, judgement of 14 January 2020, application no. 41288/15. The case concerned two young men in a relationship which posted a photograph of the couple kissing on Facebook, thing that led to hundreds of online hate comments and threads. Both the prosecuting authorities and the courts refused to launch a pre-trial investigation for incitement to hatred and violence against homosexuals. The Court concluded that that there had been a violation of Article 14, taken in conjunction with Article 8 of the Convention and violation of the Article 13. .... 289

127. Eur. Court of HR, Breyer v. Germany, judgment of 30 January 2020, application no. 50001/12. The case concerned the storage of pre-paid SIM card users’ data by telecommunications companies. The court concluded that Germany had not overstepped the limits of its discretion (“margin of appreciation”) in applying the law concerned and there had been no violation of the applicants’ rights by the collection of the data ..... 291

128. Eur. Court of HR Buturuga v. Romania, judgment of 11 February 2020, application no. 56867/15. The case concerned allegations of domestic violence and of violation of the confidentiality of electronic correspondence by the former husband of the applicant, who complained of shortcomings in the system for protecting victims of this type of violence. The Court found that the national authorities had not addressed the criminal investigation as raising the specific issue of domestic violence, and that they had thereby failed to provide an appropriate response to the seriousness of the facts complained applicant. .... 293

129. Eur. Court of HR, Gaughran v. United Kingdom, judgment of 13 February 2020, application no. 45245/15. The case concerned a complaint about the indefinite retention of personal data (DNA profile, fingerprints and photograph) of a man who had a spent conviction for driving with excess alcohol in Northern Ireland. , the Court considered that the retention of the applicant’s data had failed to strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests. .... 295

130. Eur. Court of HR, Trajkovski and Chipovski v. North Macedonia, judgment of 13 February 2020, application nos. 53205/13 and 63320/13. The case concerned the retention of DNA data of convicted persons. The indefinite retention is a disproportionate interference with the applicants' right to privacy. .... 296

131. Eur. Court of HR, Hudorovic and others v. Slovenia, judgement of 10 March 2020, application nos. 24816/14 and 25140/14. The case concerned complaints by the applicants, who are all Slovenian nationals of Roma origin, about an alleged lack of access to drinking water and sanitation, taking into consideration their lifestyle and minority status. The Court found that the authorities had taken positive steps to provide them with adequate access to safe drinking water therefore there had been no violation of Article 8. .... 297

132. Eur. Court of HR, Marina v. Romania, judgment of 26 may 2020, application no.50469/14. The case concerned a radio programme during which a letter was read out containing personal information about Mr Marina and his ex-wife, without their knowledge and on the initiative of the applicant’s sister. .... 299

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137. Eur. Court of HR, *Y.T. v. Bulgaria*, judgement of 09 July 2020, application number 4171/16. The case concerned a transsexual (Y.T.) who had taken steps to change his physical appearance and whose request for (female to male) gender reassignment had been refused by the Bulgarian courts. The Court concluded that the domestic authorities' refusal to grant legal recognition to Y.T.'s gender reassignment, without giving relevant and sufficient reasons, had thus constituted an unjustified interference with Y.T.'s right to respect for his private life.  
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138. Eur. Court of HR, *Rana v. Hungary*, judgement of 16 July 2020, application number 40888/17. The case concerned a transgender man from Iran who had obtained asylum in Hungary but could not legally change his gender and name in that country. The Court concluded that a fair balance had not been struck between the public interest and the applicant's right to respect for his private life owing to the refusal to give him access to the legal gender recognition procedure. .... 309
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140. Eur. Court of HR, *D v. France*, judgement of 16 July 2020, application number 11288/18. The case concerned the refusal to record in the French register of births, marriages and deaths the details of the birth certificate of a child born abroad through a gestational surrogacy arrangement in so far as the certificate designated the intended mother, who was also the child's genetic mother, as the mother. The Court concluded that this refusal was not in breach of the right to respect for private life, in so far as a legal parent-child relationship can be established through adoption..... 313
141. Eur. Court of HR, *Veljkovic-Jukic v. Switzerland*, judgement of 21 July 2020, application no; 59534/14. The case concerned the withdrawal of the permanent residence permit of a Croatian national who has lived in Switzerland since the age of 14, because of her criminal conviction for drug trafficking, and her possible removal from Switzerland. The Court found that Switzerland had not overstepped the margin of appreciation afforded to it, particularly given the seriousness of her conviction for a drug-related offence and the fact that the applicant and her family members could integrate without major difficulties in one of the destination countries proposed by the Federal Supreme Court: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia or Serbia..... 314
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143. Eur. Court of HR, *Hurbain v. Belgium*, judgment of 22 June 2021, application no 57292/16. The case concerned an order to anonymise an article in a newspaper's electronic archive (which referred to a person's

involvement in a fatal road accident for which he was subsequently convicted). The domestic court had taken the view that to keep the article online could cause indefinite and serious harm to the driver's reputation, giving him a "virtual criminal record", when he had not only served his sentence after a final conviction but had also been rehabilitated. It had thus found that the most effective way to ensure respect for his private life, without disproportionately affecting Mr Hurbain's freedom of expression, would be to anonymise the article on the newspaper's website by replacing the individual's full name with the letter X. The Belgian courts had weighed up the driver's right to respect for his private life, on the one hand, and Mr Hurbain's freedom of expression, on the other, in accordance with the criteria laid down in the Court's case-law. The Court of Appeal had, in particular, considered the harm sustained by the driver on account of the article being online, having regard to the passage of time (about 20 years) since its original publication and to the fact that its anonymisation on the website of Le Soir would not affect the text of the original article and would be the most effective and proportionate measure, among the various options. The reasons given by the domestic courts had thus been relevant and sufficient, and the measure imposed on Mr Hurbain could be regarded as proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued (right to respect for the driver's private life) and as striking a fair balance between the competing rights at stake.....

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144. Eur. Court of HR, Hájovský v. Slovakia, judgment of 1 July 2021, application no 7796/16. The case concerned a newspaper publication of private information and non-blurred photographs of the applicant taken covertly and under pretences. The Court undertook a balancing test concerning the applicant's right to private life and the defendant's right to freedom of expression and concluded that there had been a violation of Article 8. 321

145. Eur. Court of HR, M.A. v. Denmark, judgment of 9 July 2021, application no 6697/18. The case concerned a delay of three years imposed in 2016 pursuant to Danish law on the applicant's right to family reunification owing to his temporary protection status. The Court found in particular that, given the lack of an individualised assessment of the applicant's case and the length of the wait to be able to avail of his right to family reunification, the authorities had failed to strike a fair balance between the needs of the applicant individually and the economic well-being of the country in their assessment of his application to be reunited with his wife. .... 323

146. Eur. Court of HR, Polat v. Austria, judgment of 20 July 2021, application no 12886/16. The case concerned a post-mortem examination of the applicant's son carried out against her will. The Court found in particular that the Austrian authorities had failed to balance the needs of science and the protection of public health against the applicant's rights in carrying out the post-mortem against her will and against her religious convictions, and examining the issue later in the courts. It also found that the failure to disclose to the applicant information regarding the extent of the examination given her specific circumstances had been a violation of her rights. 326

147. Eur Court of HR, Gumenyuk and others v. Ukraine, judgment of 22 July 2021, application no 11423/19. The case concerned judges of the former Supreme Court of Ukraine who were prevented from exercising their functions, without having ever been formally dismissed, because of judicial reform and legislative amendments that took place in 2016. The Court found that the right of access to a court was a fundamental procedural right for the protection of members of the judiciary, and the applicants should, in principle, have been able to go to court with their allegations. In addition, the Court considered that being prevented from exercising as Supreme Court judges since December 2017, despite a Constitutional Court ruling in their favour, had significantly affected their private lives and constituted an interference with their right to respect for private life..... 328

148. Eur. Court of HR, Sārgava v. Estonia, judgment of 16 November 2021, application no 698/19. Violation of Article 8 due to the search of a lawyer's office, home and vehicle and the obtaining of information from his computer and telephone. The Court decided that the information retrieved from the computer and mobile phone was covered by the lawyer's professional secrecy and its seizure was in violation of Article 8. .... 330

149. Eur. Court of HR, Vasil Vasilev v. Bulgaria, judgment of 16 November 2021, application No 7610/15. The case concerns the interception, recording and transcription of a telephone conversation in 2010 between the applicant and one of his clients, a former Minister of Defence, who was being covertly monitored in connection with a criminal case. Mr Vasilev complained to the prosecuting authorities and brought a claim for damages,

arguing that the conversation was covered by lawyer-client privilege and that its recording and transcript should have been destroyed..... 331

150. Eur. Court of HR, *Biancardi v. Italy*, judgment of 25 November 2021, application no 77419/16. The case concerned the “right to be forgotten”. The applicant, a former editor-in-chief of an online newspaper, was found liable in civil proceedings for having kept on his newspaper’s website an article reporting on a fight in a restaurant, giving details on the related criminal proceedings. The courts noted in particular that the applicant had failed to de-index the tags to the article, meaning that anyone could type into a search engine the name of the restaurant or its owner and have access to sensitive information on the criminal proceedings, despite the owner’s request to have the article removed. The Court shared the Government’s point of view that not only Internet search engine providers could be obliged to de-index material but also administrators of newspaper or journalistic archives accessible through the Internet, such as the applicant. It also agreed with the domestic courts’ rulings that the prolonged and easy access to information on the criminal proceedings concerning the restaurant owner had breached his right to reputation. The applicant’s right to impart information under the Convention had not therefore been breached, and all the more so given that he had not actually been required to remove the article from the Internet. This was the first case in which the Court had examined whether a journalist’s civil liability for not de-indexing information published on the Internet had been compatible with Article 10 of the Convention.. ..... 331

151. Eur. Court of HR, *Standard Verlagsgesellschaft mbH v. Austria* (no. 3), judgment of 7 December 2021, application no. 39378/15. The case concerned court orders for the applicant media company to reveal the sign-up information or registered users who had posted comments on its website, *derStandard.at*, the website of the newspaper *Der Standard*. This had followed comments allegedly linking politicians to, among other things, corruption or neo-Nazis, which the applicant company had removed, albeit refusing to reveal the information of the commenters. The Court found in particular that user data did not enjoy the protection of “journalistic sources”, and there was no absolute right to online anonymity. However, the domestic courts had not even balanced the interests of the plaintiffs with the interests of the applicant company in keeping its users anonymous so as to help promote the free exchange of ideas and information as covered by Article 10. The Court found a violation of Article 10..... 334

152. Eur. Court of HR, *Abdi Ibrahim v. Norway*, judgment of 10 December 2021, application no 15379/16. The case concerned the decision by the Norwegian authorities to allow the adoption of a child by a foster family against his mother’s wishes. The mother, a Somali national who had moved to Norway, did not ask for her son’s return as he had spent a long time with his foster parents, but wished for him to maintain his cultural and religious roots. The Court decided to examine the applicant’s wish to have her son brought up in line with her Muslim faith as an integral part of her complaint under Article 8, as interpreted and applied in the light of Article 9 (freedom of religion). Indeed, there had been shortcomings in the overall decision-making process leading to the adoption, which had not given sufficient weight to the mother and child’s mutual interest in maintaining ties. .... 336

153. Eur. Court of HR, *Ekimdzhev and Others v. Bulgaria*, judgment of 11 January 2022, application no. 70078/12. The case concerned secret surveillance and the system of retention and subsequent accessing of communications data in Bulgaria. The Court found a violation of Article 8 in respect of secret surveillance and a violation of Article 8 in respect of retention and accessing of communication data..... 339

154. Eur. Court of HR, *OOO Memo v. Russia*, judgment of 15 March 2022, application no 2840/10. The case concerned a civil defamation suit brought by the Volgograd Region Authority against a media company which OOO Memo owned. The Court found in particular that although civil defamation proceedings were open to private or public companies to protect their reputation in the marketplace, this could not be the case for a large, taxpayer-funded, executive body like the plaintiff in this case. The proceedings and the consequent interference had therefore not had a “legitimate aim” under the Convention. The European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights. .... 341

155. Eur. Court of HR, *C.E. and Others v. France*, judgment of 24 March 2022, application nos. 29775/18 and 29693/19. The judgment concerned two cases. The first related to the rejection by the domestic courts of an application for full adoption of a child, made by the biological mother’s former partner. The second concerned the domestic courts’ refusal to issue a document attesting to a matter of common knowledge (*acte de notoriété*) recognising a legal parent-child relationship, on the basis of *de facto* enjoyment of status (*possession d’état*), between a child and the biological mother’s former partner. The European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been: no violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights..... 343
156. Eur. Court of HR, *Nuh Uzun v. Turkey*, judgment of 29 May 2022, application no 49341/18. The case mainly concerned the uploading of the applicants’ correspondence, while they were in detention, onto the National Judicial Network Server (*Ulusal Yargı Ağı Bilişim Sistemi – “UYAP”*). The Court found that the uploading of the correspondence of remand and convicted prisoners onto the UYAP server stemmed directly and specifically from an instruction issued by the Ministry of Justice on 10 October 2016 and reissued on 1 March 2017. It noted that the instruction had been addressed to the public prosecutors and prison authorities. The documents in question were therefore unpublished internal documents which as a matter of principle did not have binding force. In the Court’s view, texts of this kind, which were not issued under any rule-making powers, could not be regarded as “law” of sufficient “quality” for the purposes of the Court’s case-law. Consequently, the interference with the applicants’ right to respect for their private life and correspondence could not be said to have been “in accordance with the law” within the meaning of Article 8 of the Convention..... 346
157. Eur. Court of HR, *Algirdas Butkevicius v. Lithuania*, judgment of 14 June 2022, application No 70489/17. The case concerned a telephone conversation between Mr Butkevicius and a mayor that was secretly recorded during a pre-trial investigation into possible corruption in connection with territorial planning and was made public at a hearing of the Seimas’s (the Lithuanian Parliament’s) Anti-Corruption Commission. At the time, Mr Butkevicius was the Prime Minister of Lithuania. The Court found that, even if Mr Butkevicius’s reputation had been affected by the disclosure of his telephone conversation, there was no evidence that it had been affected to such an extent that it could count as a disproportionate interference with his rights guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention. .... 348
158. Eur Court of HR, *Haščák v. Slovakia*, judgment of 23 June 2022, application nos: 58359/12, 27787/16 and 67667/16. The case concerned a surveillance operation (“the Gorilla operation”) carried out in 2005 and 2006 by the Slovak Intelligence Service and the intelligence material obtained by it. The Court, citing its findings in substantially the same situation of the applicant in *Zoltán Varga v. Slovakia*, highlighted the deficiencies in the applicable rules and procedures and the lack of external oversight of both the SIS operation and the retention by the SIS of some of the resulting data, and found that both had thus not been in accordance with the law for the Convention purposes. .... 351
159. Eur. Court of HR, *Naumenko and Sia Rix Shipping v. Latvia*, judgment of 23 June 2022, application No 50805/14. A search of an applicant's business premises and the seizure of a large quantity of documents and electronic files during an unannounced operation by the Competition Authority is legal if this interference with the right to privacy is justified. .... 353
160. Eur Court of HR, *M.D. and Others v. Spain*, judgment of 28 June 2022, application no. 36584/17. The case concerned the compiling of files by the police in Catalonia on judges who had expressed certain views on that region’s independence from Spain. Material from the files, including photographs, had been subsequently leaked to the press. The Court found in particular that the mere existence of the police reports, which had not been compiled in accordance with any law, had contravened the Convention. As for the investigation into the leak, the Court found it to have been inadequate owing to the failure to interview a person crucial to the investigation, the Senior Chief of Police of Barcelona. The Court consequently decided on a violation of Article 8 ECHR. .... 354

161. Eur. Court of HR, Y.G. v. Russia, judgment of 30 August 2022, application no 8647/12. The applicant alleged that his personal data including data concerning health data was unlawfully disclosed through a database being sold in a market. The Court found a violation of Article 8..... 356

SUPERVISION OF THE EXECUTION OF JUDGMENTS AND DECISIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ..... 357

**JUDGMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
(PRESS RELEASES AND LEGAL SUMMARIES)\***

1. Eur. Court of HR, *Klass and others v. Germany*, judgment of 6 September 1978, application no. 5029/71. Law authorising secret services to carry out secret monitoring of communications (postal and telephone).

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**no. 5029/71**  
**06.09.1978**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**KLASS AND OTHERS v. GERMANY**

Law authorising secret services to carry out secret monitoring of communications did not violate the  
Convention

**Basic Facts**

The applicants, who are German nationals, are Gerhard Klass, a public prosecutor, Peter Lubberger, a lawyer, Jürgen Nussbruch, a judge, Hans-Jürgen Pohl and Dieter Selb, lawyers.

Legislation passed in 1968 - namely an amendment to Article 10 §2 of the Basic Law and an Act of 13 August 1968 restricting the right to secrecy of mail, post and telecommunications - authorises in certain circumstances secret surveillance without the need to inform the person concerned. In addition, the legislation excludes legal remedy before the courts in respect of the ordering and implementation of the surveillance measures; it institutes instead supervision by two agencies, that is a Board of five Members of Parliament appointed by the Bundestag and a Commission of three members nominated by that Board.

Following an appeal lodged by the applicants, the Federal Constitutional Court held on 15 December 1970 that the Act of 13 August 1968 was void insofar as it prevented notification to the subject of the surveillance even when such notification could be made without jeopardising the purpose of the restriction.

**Law – Article 25 § 1**

The German Government had contended that, since the substance of the applicants' complaint was the purely hypothetical possibility of being subject to surveillance under the legislation, they could not be considered as "victims" within the meaning of Article 25 of the Convention. This Article empowers the European Commission of Human Rights, subject to certain conditions, to receive petitions from any person "claiming to be the victim of a violation" of the Convention.

Having regard to the specific circumstances of the case, the Court concluded that the applicants were entitled to claim to be victims of a violation even though - due to the secrecy of any surveillance measures - they were not able to allege in support of their application that they had in fact been subject to surveillance.

The Court then turned to the question whether the applicants were actually the victims of any violation of the Convention and examined the compatibility with the Convention of the contested legislation.

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\* The complete texts of the Court's judgments are available on the Court's website at [www.echr.coe.int](http://www.echr.coe.int)

## Law – Article 8

There being no dispute that the contested legislation results in an interference with the applicants' right to respect for their private and family life and correspondence, the cardinal issue was whether that interference is justified under paragraph 2 of Article 8. Since that paragraph provides for an exception to a right guaranteed by the Convention, it must, emphasised the Court, be narrowly interpreted. Thus, "powers of secret surveillance of citizens, characterising as they do the police State, are tolerable under the Convention only insofar as strictly necessary for safeguarding the democratic institutions".

The Court found that the legislation in question has an aim that is legitimate under paragraph 2 of Article 8, namely the safeguarding of national security and the prevention of disorder or crime. It then went on to consider whether the means adopted remain within the bounds of what is necessary in a democratic society in order to achieve that aim.

The Court took notice of the fact that "democratic societies nowadays find themselves threatened by highly sophisticated forms of espionage and by terrorism, with the result that the State must be able, in order effectively to counter such threats, to undertake the secret surveillance of subversive elements operating within its jurisdiction". It had therefore to be accepted that "the existence of some legislative granting powers of secret surveillance over the mail, post and, telecommunications is, under exceptional conditions, necessary in a democratic Society in the interests of national security and/or for the prevention of disorder or crime".

Although recognising that the Convention leaves to Contracting States a certain discretion as regards the fixing of the conditions under which the system of surveillance is to be operated, the judgment continues: "... this does not mean that the Contracting States enjoy an unlimited discretion to subject persons within their jurisdiction to secret surveillance. The Court, being aware of the danger such a law poses of undermining or even destroying democracy on the ground of defending it, affirms that the Contracting States may not, in the name of the struggle against espionage and terrorism, adopt whatever measures they deem appropriate!" "The Court must be satisfied that, whatever system is adopted, there exist adequate and effective guarantees against abuse."

In the light of these considerations, the Court then examined the functioning of the system of secret surveillance established by the contested legislation. The judgment notes in particular that:

- according to that legislation, a series of limitative conditions have to be satisfied before a surveillance measure can be ordered;
- strict conditions are laid down with regard to the implementation of the surveillance measures and to the processing of the information thereby obtained;
- while "in a field where abuse is potentially so easy in individual cases and could have such harmful consequences for democratic society as a whole, it is in principle desirable to entrust supervisory control to a judge", the two supervisory bodies instituted by the legislation "may, in the circumstances of the case, be regarded as enjoying sufficient independence to give an objective ruling";
- the fact of not informing the individual once surveillance has ceased cannot itself be incompatible with Article 8 since it is this very fact which ensures the efficacy of the measure.

## Law – Article 13

The Court then examined the case under Article 13 which guarantees that everyone whose rights and freedoms as set forth in the Convention are violated shall have an effective remedy before a national authority. The Court found, *inter alia*, that:

- the lack of notification of surveillance measures is not, in the circumstances of the case, contrary to the concept of an "effective remedy" and does not therefore entail a violation of Article 13;
- "for the purposes of the present proceedings, an 'effective remedy' under Article must mean a remedy that is as effective as can be having regard to the restricted scope for recourse inherent in any system of secret surveillance";
- in the particular circumstances of this case, the aggregate of remedies available to the applicants under German law satisfies the requirements of Article 13.

## **Law – Article 6 § 1**

The Court concluded that Article 6, even if applicable, had not been violated.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8, no violation of Articles 13 and 6 § 1

## **2. Eur. Court of HR, *Malone v. The United Kingdom*, judgment of 2 August 1984, application no. 8691/79. Interception of postal and telephone communications and release of information obtained from "metering" of telephones, both effected by or on behalf of the police within the general context of criminal investigation.**

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**no. 8691/79**  
**02.08.1984**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **MALONE v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Interception of communications and release of information from metering of telephones by the police violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant in the present case is Mr. James Malone, a United Kingdom citizen who currently resides in Dorking, Surrey, in England. In March 1977, he was charged with offences relating to the dishonest handling of stolen goods; he was ultimately acquitted. During his trial, it emerged that a telephone conversation to which he had been a party had been intercepted by the Post Office on behalf of the police on the authority of a warrant issued by the Home Secretary.

Mr. Malone further believes that, at the behest of the police, his correspondence has been intercepted, his telephone lines "tapped" and, in addition, his telephone "metered" by a device recording all the numbers dialled. Beyond admitting the interception of the one conversation adverted to in evidence at his trial, the United Kingdom Government have neither admitted nor denied the allegations concerning correspondence and tapping, and have denied that concerning metering; they have, however, accepted that the applicant, as a suspected receiver of stolen goods, was one of a class of persons whose postal and telephone communications were liable to be intercepted.

It has for long been the publicly known practice for interceptions of postal and telephone communications for the purposes of the detection and prevention of crime to be carried out on the authority of a warrant issued under the hand of a Secretary of State, as a general rule the Home Secretary. There is, however, no overall statutory code governing the matter. Nonetheless, various statutory provisions are relevant, including one under which the Post Office - as from 1981, the Post Office and British Telecommunications - may be required to inform the Crown about matters transmitted through the postal or telecommunication services.

There also exists a practice, of which Parliament has been informed, whereby the telephone service - the Post Office prior to 1921 and thereafter British Telecommunications - makes and supplies records of metering at the request of the police in connection with police enquiries into the commission of crime.

In October Mr. Malone instituted civil proceedings in the High Court against the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, seeking, amongst other things, a declaration that any tapping of conversations on his telephone without his consent was unlawful even if done pursuant to a warrant of the Secretary of State. The Vice-Chancellor, Sir Robert Megarry, dismissed his claim in February 1979.

## **Law – Article 8**

### Interception of communications

The present case is concerned only with interception of communications and metering of telephones effected by or on behalf of the police within the general context of a criminal investigation, together with the relevant legal and administrative framework.

The one admitted interception of a telephone call to which Mr. Malone was a party involved an "interference" with the exercise of his right to respect for his private life and his correspondence. In addition, as a suspected receiver of stolen goods, Mr. Malone was a member of a class of persons against whom measures of postal and telephone interception were liable to be employed. This being so, the existence in England and Wales of laws and practices which permit and establish a system for carrying out secret surveillance of communications amounted in itself to such an "interference", apart from any concrete measures taken against him.

The expression "in accordance with the law" in paragraph 2 of Article 8 means firstly that any interference must have some basis in the law of the country concerned. However, over and above compliance with domestic law, it also requires that domestic law itself be compatible with the rule of law. It thus implies that there must be a measure of legal protection in domestic law against arbitrary interferences by public authorities with the rights safeguarded by paragraph 1.

The Court accepted the Government's contention that the requirements of the Convention cannot be exactly the same in the special context of interception of communications for the purposes of police investigations as they are in other contexts. Thus, the "law" does not have to be such that an individual should be enabled to foresee when his communications are likely to be intercepted so that he can adapt his conduct accordingly. Nevertheless, the law must be sufficiently clear in its terms to give citizens in general an adequate indication as to the circumstances in which and the conditions on which public authorities are empowered to resort to this secret and potentially dangerous interference with the right to respect for private life and correspondence.

Furthermore, since the implementation in practice of measures of secret surveillance of communications is not open to scrutiny by the individuals concerned or the public at large, it would be contrary to the rule of law for the legal discretion granted to the executive to be expressed in terms of an unfettered power. Consequently, the substantive law itself, as opposed to accompanying administrative practice, must indicate the scope and manner of exercise of any such discretion with sufficient clarity, having regard to the legitimate aim of the measure in question, to give the individual adequate protection against arbitrary interference.

It was common ground that the settled practice of intercepting communications on behalf of the police in pursuance of a warrant issued by the Secretary of State was lawful under the law of England and Wales. There were, however, fundamental differences of view between the Government, the applicant and the Commission as to the effect, if any, of certain statutory provisions in imposing legal restraints on the manner in which and the purposes for which interception of communications may lawfully be carried out.

The Court found that, on the evidence adduced, in its present state domestic law in this domain is somewhat obscure and open to differing interpretations. In particular, it cannot be said with any reasonable certainty what elements of the powers to intercept are incorporated in legal rules and what elements remain within the discretion of the executive. In the opinion of the Court, the law of England and Wales does not indicate with reasonable clarity the scope and manner of exercise of the relevant discretion conferred on the public authorities. To that extent, the minimum degree of legal protection to which citizens are entitled under the rule of law in a democratic society is lacking.

The Court therefore concluded that the interferences found were not "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of paragraph 2 of Article 8.

Undoubtedly, the existence of some law granting powers of interception of communications to aid the police may be "necessary for prevention of disorder or crime". However, "in a democratic society" the system of secret surveillance adopted must contain adequate guarantees against abuse.

In the light of its conclusion under (b), the Court considered that it did not have to examine further the content of the other guarantees required by paragraph 2 of Article 8 and whether the system complained of having furnished/ furnishing those guarantees in the particular circumstances.

#### "Metering" of telephones

The records of metering contain information, in particular the numbers dialled, which is an integral element in the communications made by telephone. Consequently, release of that information to the police without the consent of the subscriber amounts to an interference with the exercise of a right guaranteed by Article 8. The applicant was potentially liable to be directly affected by the practice which existed in this respect. Despite the clarification by the Government that the police had not caused his telephone to be metered, the applicant could claim to be the victim of an interference in breach of Article 8 by reason of the very practice.

No rule of domestic law makes it unlawful for the telephone service to comply with a request from the police to make and supply records of metering. Apart from this absence of prohibition, there would appear to be no legal rules concerning the scope and manner of exercise of the discretion enjoyed by the public authorities. Consequently, so the Court found, although lawful in terms of domestic law, the resultant interference was not "in accordance with the law", within the meaning of paragraph 2 of Article 8.

This finding removed the need for the Court to determine whether the interference was "necessary in a democratic society".

Having regard to its decision on Article 8, the Court did not consider it necessary to rule on alleged violations of Article 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8 in the applicant's case as regards both interception of communications and release of records of metering to the police. No violation of Article 13

#### **Article 50 (Just Satisfaction)**

By way of "just satisfaction" under Article 50, the applicant had claimed reimbursement of legal costs and an award of compensation. Judging that it was not yet ready for decision, the Court reserved the question and referred it back to the Chamber originally constituted to hear the case.

**3. Eur. Court of HR, Leander v. Sweden, judgment of 26 March 1987, application no. 9248/81. Use of information kept in a secret police-register when assessing a person's suitability for employment on a post of importance for national security.**

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**no. 9248/81**  
**26.03.1987**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**LEANDER v. SWEDEN**

Refusal to grant access to information kept in a secret police-register on grounds of national security did not violate the Convention

**Basic Facts**

In August 1979, Mr. Leander was considered for employment at the Naval Museum in Karlskrona, in the south of Sweden. Part of the Museum's premises was located within an adjacent naval base. As a consequence, appointment to the post sought by Mr. Leander had to be preceded by a security check - a so-called personnel control, which involved consulting information held on a secret register kept by the security police. The procedure to be followed was governed principally by the Personnel Control Ordinance 1969, published in the Swedish Official Journal. In Mr. Leander's case, the outcome of the control was such that his employment was refused, without his having received an opportunity to know and to comment upon the information released to the Navy from the secret police-register.

Mr. Leander complained to the Government, requesting annulment of the assessment that he constituted a security risk, a declaration that he was acceptable for employment, access to the information kept on him and an opportunity to comment on this information. The Government rejected the complaint on all points.

**Law – Article 8**

It was uncontested that the secret police register contained information relating to Mr. Leander's private life. Both the storing and the release of such information, which had been coupled with a refusal to allow Mr. Leander an opportunity to refute it, amounted to an interference with his right to respect for private life as guaranteed by Article 8 § 1.

The aim of the Swedish personnel control system was clearly a legitimate one for the purposes of Article 8, that is the protection of national security.

The interference had a valid base in domestic law, namely the Personnel Control Ordinance. The Ordinance, which had been published in the Swedish Official Journal, met the further condition that the "law" in question be accessible to the individual concerned.

It is also a requirement in Article 8 that the consequences of the "law" be foreseeable for the individual concerned. This requirement, the Court pointed out, cannot be the same in the special context of secret controls of staff in sectors affecting national security as in many other fields. The Court concluded that in a system applicable to citizens generally, as under the Personnel Control Ordinance, the "law" in question has to be sufficiently clear as to the circumstances in which and the conditions on which the public authorities are empowered to resort to this kind of potentially dangerous interference with private life.

Taking into account the various limitations imposed on the registration of information, in particular the prohibition on registration merely on the ground of political opinion, and the explicit and detailed provisions

governing the operation of the personnel control procedure, the Court found that Swedish law satisfied the requirement of foreseeability.

According to well-established principles in the Court's case-law, the notion of necessity implies that the interference must correspond to a pressing social need and, in particular, that it is proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued. The respondent State's interest in protecting national security had to be balanced against the seriousness of the interference with the applicant's right to respect for private life. The Court accepted that, in the circumstances, the State enjoyed a wide margin of appreciation in making its assessment.

There can be no doubt as to the necessity for the Contracting States to have a system for controlling the suitability of candidates for employment in posts of importance for national security. Nevertheless, in view of the risk that a system of secret surveillance for the protection of national security poses of undermining or even destroying democracy on the ground of defending it, the Court had to be satisfied that there existed in the system at issue adequate and effective guarantees against abuse.

The Court noted that the Swedish system was designed to reduce the effects of the personnel control procedure to an unavoidable minimum and that, leaving aside the monitoring affected by the Government themselves, supervision of its proper implementation was entrusted both to Parliament and to independent institutions. The Court attached especial importance, firstly, to the presence of parliamentarians on the police board that authorised the release of the information to the Navy and, secondly, to the supervision effected by the Chancellor of Justice and the Parliamentary Ombudsman as well as the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Justice. The safeguards contained in the Swedish personnel control system were therefore judged sufficient to meet the requirements of Article 8.

Having regard to the wide margin of appreciation available to it, the respondent State was entitled to consider that, in the particular case, the interests of national security prevailed over Mr. Leander's individual interests.

### **Law – Article 10**

It appeared clearly from the provisions of the Personnel Control Ordinance that its purpose was to ensure that persons holding security-sensitive posts had the necessary personal qualifications. This being so, the right of access to the public service, a right not protected by the Convention, lay at the heart of the issue submitted to the Court. There had accordingly been no interference with Mr. Leander's freedom to express opinions.

Article 10 does not, in the circumstances such as those in the case at issue, confer on the individual a right of access to a register containing information on his personal position, nor does it embody an obligation on the Government to impart such information to the individual.

Accordingly, there had likewise been no interference with Mr. Leander's freedom to receive information.

### **Law – Article 13**

As established in the Court's case-law, the "national authority" referred to in Article 13 need not be a judicial authority in the strict sense. In addition, in the special context of Mr. Leander's case, an "effective remedy" must mean a remedy that is as effective as can be having regard to the restricted scope for recourse inherent in any system of secret surveillance for the protection of national security. Further, although no single remedy may itself entirely satisfy the requirements of Article 13, the aggregate of remedies provided for under domestic law may do so.

The Court noted that under Swedish law the applicant could have filed complaints with the Parliamentary Ombudsman or the Chancellor of Justice, who both had to be considered independent of the Government. Although both lacked the power to render legally binding decisions, in practice their opinions were usually followed. There also existed the remedy of complaint to the Government, to which Mr. Leander had had recourse, albeit unsuccessfully.

The Court held that even if, taken on its own, the complaint to the Government were not to be considered sufficient, the aggregate of available remedies satisfied the conditions of Article 13 in the particular circumstances of the case.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Articles 8, 10 and 13

**4. *Eur. Court of HR, Gaskin v. The United Kingdom*, judgment of 7 July 1989, application no. 10454/83. Refusal to grant former child in care unrestricted access to case records kept by social services.**

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**no. 10454/83**  
**07.07.1989**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**GASKIN v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The procedures followed in relation to access by the applicant to his case records failed to secure respect for the Convention

**Basic Facts**

Following the death of his mother, the applicant, a British citizen born in 1959, was received into care on 1 September 1960 by the Liverpool City Council under the Children Act 1948. He ceased to be in the care of the Council on attaining the age of majority (18) on 2 December 1977. During the period while the applicant was in care, he was boarded out with various foster parents. He contends that he was ill-treated.

Under the provisions of the Boarding-Out of Children Regulations 1955, the local authority was under a duty to keep certain confidential records concerning the applicant and his care.

In 1979 the applicant, wishing to bring proceedings against the local authority for damages for negligence, made an application under the Administration of Justice Act 1970 for discovery of the local authority's case records made during his period in care. The discovery was refused by the High Court on 22 February 1980, on the ground that case records compiled pursuant to the 1955 Regulations were private and confidential. This decision was confirmed by the Court of Appeal on 27 June 1980.

Between 1980 and 1983, various committees of the City Council adopted resolutions on the release of child care records. To a certain extent, these resolutions were challenged in the courts. Finally, in November 1983, Liverpool City Council adopted a further resolution which provided that the information in the applicant's file should be made available to him if the contributors to the file gave their consent to disclosure. This resolution was in line with the Circular issued by the Department of Health and Social Security in August 1983.

The applicant's case record consisted of some 352 documents contributed by 46 persons. On 23 May 1986 copies of 65 documents supplied by 19 persons were sent to the applicant's solicitors. These were documents whose authors had consented to disclosure to the applicant.

## Law – Article 8

Although the Government argued that the applicant's personal file did not form part of his private life, the Court, like the Commission, found that the file did relate to Mr Gaskin's "private and family life" in such a way that the question of his access thereto fell within the ambit of Article 8. That finding was, reached without expressing any opinion on whether general rights of access to personal data may be derived from Article 8 § 1 of the Convention.

According to the Court's case-law, "although the essential object of Article 8 is to protect the individual against arbitrary interference by the public authorities, there may in addition be positive obligations inherent in an effective 'respect' for family life".

It was common ground that Mr Gaskin neither challenged the fact that information was compiled and stored about him nor alleged that any use was made of it to his detriment. He challenged rather the failure to grant him unimpeded access to that information.

Indeed, the Court found that, by refusing him complete access to his case records, the United Kingdom could not be said to have "interfered" with Mr Gaskin's private or family life. In this connection, the substance of the applicant's complaint was not that the State had acted but that it had failed to act.

It was therefore necessary to examine whether the United Kingdom, in handling the applicant's requests for access to his case records, was in breach of a positive obligation flowing from Article 8 of the Convention.

According to the Government, the proper operation of the child-care service depended on information supplied by professional persons and bodies, and others. If the confidentiality of these contributors were not respected, their co-operation would be lost and this would have a detrimental effect on the child-care service. There was no blanket refusal of access to case records. Access was given to confidential information in so far as the consent of the contributor could be obtained.

According to the applicant, however, the Access to Personal Files Act 1987 and regulations made thereunder illustrated the extent to which information of the kind sought by him would in the future be made available by public authorities. The Government pointed out that the new regulations would not apply to records compiled before the entry into force of the regulations (April 1989).

The local authority obtained consent in respect of 65 out of some 352 documents, and those were released. The Government argued that no obligation to do more than this existed.

In the Court's opinion, however, persons in the applicant's situation have a vital interest, protected by the Convention, in receiving the information necessary to know and understand their childhood and early development. Although a system, like the British one, which makes access to child-care records dependent on the contributor's consent, can in principle be considered to be compatible with the obligations under Article 8, the Court considered that the interests of an individual seeking access to records relating to his private and family life must be secured when a contributor to the records either is not available or improperly refuses consent. In such a case, the principle of proportionality requires that an independent authority decide whether access should be granted.

As no such system was available to Mr Gaskin, the Court held by eleven votes to six that the procedures followed had failed to secure respect for Mr Gaskin's private and family life as required by Article 8 of the Convention.

As regards the alleged breach of Article 10, the Court unanimously held that Article 10 did not embody an obligation on the Government to impart the information in question to the individual. There had thus been no interference with Mr Gaskin's right to receive information as protected by that Article.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8, no violation of Article 10

### **Article 50 (Just Satisfaction)**

Making a determination on an equitable basis, the Court awarded to Mr Gaskin the amount of £5,000 as non-pecuniary damage.

The applicant claimed a total sum of £117,000 for legal costs and expenses. The Court considered that the total amount claimed was not reasonable as to quantum. Making an equitable assessment, the Court awarded Mr Gaskin, for legal fees and expenses, the sum of £11,000 less 8,295 French francs already paid in legal aid.

### **Separate Opinions**

Several judges expressed separate opinions which are annexed to the judgment.

**5. *Eur. Court of HR, Kruslin v. France*, judgment of 24 April 1990, application no. 11801/85, and *Eur. Court of HR, Huvig v. France*, judgment of 24 April 1990, application no. 11105/84. The applicants complained about the telephone tapping carried out by senior police officer under warrant issued by investigating judge.**

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**no. 11801/85 and 11105/84  
24.04.1990**

Press release issued by the Registrar of the European Court of Human Rights

### **KRUSLIN v. FRANCE and HUVIG v. FRANCE**

The telephone tapping carried out by senior police officer under warrant issued by investigating judge violated the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

#### Kruslin case

In April 1985 the Indictment Division of the Toulouse Court of Appeal committed Mr Kruslin for trial at the Haute-Garonne Assize Court on charges of aiding and abetting a murder, aggravated theft and attempted aggravated theft. One item of evidence was the recording of a telephone conversation that the applicant had had on a line belonging to a third party, a recording that had been made at the request of an investigating judge at Saint-Gaudens in connection with other proceedings. An appeal on points of law brought by Mr Kruslin on this ground was dismissed by the Court of Cassation.

## Huvig case

Mr Huvig, who, with his wife's assistance, ran a business at the material time, was the subject of a complaint in December 1973 alleging tax evasion, failure to make entries in accounts and false accounting.

A judicial investigation was begun by an investigating judge at Chaumont, who issued a warrant to the gendarmerie at Langres requiring them to monitor and transcribe all Mr and Mrs Huvig's telephone calls, both business and private ones. The telephone tapping took place over a period of 28 hours in April 1974.

Charges were brought against Mr and Mrs Huvig, who were convicted on nearly all of them by the Chaumont *tribunal de grande instance* in March 1982. In March 1983 the Dijon Court of Appeal upheld the convictions and increased the sentences. In April 1984 the Court of Cassation dismissed an appeal on points of law by the applicants.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court found that the interceptions complained of amounted to interferences by a public authority with the exercise of the applicants' right to respect for their correspondence and their private life. It proceeded to ascertain whether such interferences were justified under paragraph 2 of Article 8.

The expression "in accordance with the law", within the meaning of Article 8 § 2, required firstly that the impugned measure should have some basis in domestic law, but also referred to the quality of the law in question, requiring that it should be accessible to the person concerned, who had moreover to be able to foresee its consequences for him, and compatible with the rule of law.

It had been a matter of dispute before the Commission and the Court whether the first condition had been satisfied. The applicants had said it had not been. The Government submitted that by "law" was meant the law in force in a given legal system, in this instance a combination of the written law - essentially Articles 81, 151 and 152 of the Code of Criminal Procedure - and the case-law interpreting it.

The Delegate of the Commission considered that in the case of the Continental countries, including France, only a substantive enactment of general application - whether or not passed by Parliament - could amount to a "law" for the purposes of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention.

The Court pointed out, firstly, that it was primarily for the national authorities, notably the courts, to interpret and apply domestic law. It was therefore not for the Court to express an opinion contrary to theirs on whether telephone tapping ordered by investigating judges was compatible with Article 368 of the Criminal Code. For many years now, the courts - and in particular the Court of Cassation - had regarded Articles 81, 151 and 152 of the Code of Criminal Procedure as providing a legal basis for telephone tapping carried out by a senior police officer under a warrant issued by an investigating judge. The Court held that settled case-law of that kind could not be disregarded. In relation to paragraph 2 of Article 8 of the Convention and other similar clauses, the Court had always understood the term "law" in its substantive sense, not its formal one, and had included both enactments of lower rank than statutes and unwritten law.

In sum, the Court held that the interferences complained of had had a legal basis in French law.

The second requirement which emerged from the phrase "in accordance with the law" - the accessibility of the law - did not raise any problem. The same was not true of the third requirement, the law's "foreseeability" as to the meaning and nature of the applicable measures.

As the Court had pointed out in an earlier judgment, Article 8 § 2 of the Convention did not merely refer back to domestic law but also related to the quality of the law, requiring it to be compatible with the rule of law.

The Government had submitted that the Court had to be careful not to rule on whether French legislation conformed to the Convention in the abstract and not to give a decision based on legislative policy.

Since the Court had to ascertain whether the interferences complained of were "in accordance with the law", it had to assess the relevant French "law" in force at the material times in relation to the requirements of the fundamental principle of the rule of law. Tapping and other forms of interception of telephone conversations represented a serious interference with private life and correspondence and accordingly had to be based on a "law" that was particularly precise. It was essential to have clear, detailed rules on the subject, especially as the technology available for use was continually becoming more sophisticated.

The Government had listed seventeen safeguards which they said were provided for in French law. These related either to the carrying out of telephone tapping or to the use made of the results or to the means of having any irregularities righted, and the Government had claimed that the applicants had not been deprived of any of them.

The Court did not in any way minimise the value of several of the safeguards. It noted, however, that only some of them were expressly provided for in Articles 81, 151 and 152 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Others had been laid down piecemeal in judgments given over years, the great majority of them after the interceptions complained of by the applicants. Some had not yet been expressly laid down in the case law at all. Above all, the system did not for the time being afford sufficient safeguards against various possible abuses. For example, the categories of people liable to have their telephones tapped by judicial order and the nature of the offences which might give rise to such an order were nowhere defined. Nothing obliged a judge to set a limit on the duration of telephone tapping. Similarly unspecified were the procedure for drawing up the summary reports containing intercepted conversations; the precautions to be taken in order to communicate the recordings intact and in their entirety for possible inspection by the judge (who could hardly verify the number and length of the original tapes on the spot) and by the defence; and the circumstances in which recordings might be or had to be erased or the tapes be destroyed, in particular where an accused had been discharged by an investigating judge or acquitted by a court. The information provided by the Government on these various points showed at best the existence of a practice, but a practice lacking the necessary regulatory control in the absence of legislation or case law.

In short, French law, written and unwritten, did not indicate with reasonable clarity the scope and manner of exercise of the relevant discretion conferred on the public authorities. This was truer still at the material times, so that the applicants had not enjoyed the minimum degree of protection to which citizens were entitled under the rule of law in a democratic society.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

### **Article 50 (Just Satisfaction)**

#### Kruslin case

The applicant claimed, firstly, compensation in the amount of 1,000,000 French francs (FRF) in respect of his fifteen-year prison sentence. He also sought reimbursement of FRF 70,000 in respect of lawyer's fees and expenses in the national proceedings. He made no claim for the proceedings at Strasbourg, as the Commission and the Court had granted him legal aid. The Government and the Delegate of the Commission expressed no opinion on the matter.

The Court considered that the finding that there been a breach of Article 8 afforded Mr Kruslin sufficient just satisfaction for the alleged damage and that it was accordingly unnecessary to award pecuniary compensation.

As to the costs and expenses, the Court held that France was to pay the applicant the sum of FRF 20,000 which he had sought in respect of one set of national proceedings. It dismissed the remainder of his claims.

#### Huvig case

The applicants had asked the Commission to award them "just compensation", but before the Court they had not sought either compensation or reimbursement of costs and expenses.

As these were not matters which the Court had to examine of its own motion, it found that it was unnecessary to apply Article 50 in this case.

**6. *Eur. Court of HR, Niemietz v. Germany*, judgment of 16 December 1992, application no. 13710/88. The applicant complained about the search of his office in course of criminal proceedings against a third party.**

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**no. 13710/88**  
**16.12.1992**

Press release issued by the Registrar

#### **NIEMIETZ v. GERMANY**

The search of a lawyer's office in course of criminal proceedings against a third party violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

On 9 December 1985 a letter concerning criminal proceedings pending before the Freising District Court was sent by telefax from the Freiburg post office to a judge of that court. It bore the signature "Klaus Wegner" - possibly a fictitious person - followed by the words "on behalf of the Anti-clerical Working Group of the Freiburg Bunte Liste". The applicant had for some years been chairman of the Bunte Liste, which is a local political party, and the colleague with whom he shared his office had also been active on its behalf.

In view of the contents of the letter, criminal proceedings were subsequently instituted against Klaus Wegner for insulting behaviour. In the course of the investigations the Munich District Court issued, on 8 August 1986, a warrant to search, inter alia, the applicant's office for and to seize any documents revealing the identity of Klaus Wegner; the reason given in the warrant was that mail for the Bunte Liste was sent to a post-office box the contents of which had, until 1985, been forwarded to the applicant's office. The search was affected on 13 November 1986; four cabinets with data concerning clients and six individual files were examined but no relevant documents were found.

On 27 March 1987 the Munich I Regional Court declared the applicant's appeal against the search warrant to be inadmissible, on the ground that it had already been executed. It considered that there was no legal interest in having the warrant declared unlawful and it also noted, amongst other things, that it could not be assumed that mail for the Bunte Liste could concern a lawyer-client relationship. On 18 August 1987 the Federal Constitutional Court declined to accept for adjudication the applicant's constitutional complaint

against the search warrant and the Regional Court's decision, on the ground that it did not offer sufficient prospects of success.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court held firstly that there had been an interference with the applicant's rights under Article 8, thereby rejecting the German Government's argument that that provision did not afford protection against the search of a lawyer's office. It noted the following in this connection.

Respect for private life comprised to a certain degree the right to establish and develop relationships with others. There was no reason of principle why the notion of "private life" should be taken to exclude professional or business activities, since it was in the course of their working lives that the majority of people had a significant opportunity of developing such relationships. To deny the protection of Article 8 on the ground that the measure complained of related only to professional activities could lead to an inequality of treatment, in that such protection would remain available to a person whose professional and non-professional activities could not be distinguished.

In certain Contracting States the word "home" had been accepted as extending to business premises, an interpretation which was consonant with the French text of Article 8 ("domicile"). A narrow interpretation of "home" could give rise to the same risk of inequality of treatment as that mentioned above.

To interpret the words "private life" and "home" as including certain professional or business activities or premises would be consonant with the object and purpose of Article 8; the entitlement of the Contracting States to "interfere" under paragraph 2 of that provision would remain and might be more far-reaching for such activities or premises than would otherwise be the case.

In addition, it was clear from the particular circumstances of the case that the search operations must have covered "correspondence" within the meaning of Article 8.

In the Court's opinion, the interference in question was "in accordance with the law" and pursued aims that were legitimate under paragraph 2 of Article 8, but was not "necessary in a democratic society". It considered in particular that, having regard to the materials that were in fact inspected, the search impinged on professional secrecy to an extent that was disproportionate in the circumstances.

### **Law – Article 1 of Protocol No. 1**

Mr Niemietz submitted that, by impairing his reputation as a lawyer, the search had violated Article 1 of Protocol No. 1. The Court concluded that no separate issue arose under this provision.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8. No violation of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1

### **Article 50 (just Satisfaction)**

The Court dismissed the applicant's claim for compensation under Article 50: he had not established any pecuniary damage or supplied particulars of his costs and expenses, and the finding of a violation of Article 8 constituted sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage he might have sustained.

7. *Eur. Court of HR, Murray v. The United Kingdom*, judgment of 28 October 1994, application no. 14310/88. As far as a person suspected of terrorism is concerned, entry into and search of her home for the purpose of effecting the arrest; record of personal details and photograph without her consent.

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**no. 14310/88**  
**28.10.1994**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **MURRAY v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

House search and recording of personal data and photographs without the consent of a person suspected of terrorism does not violate the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The six applicants are Irish citizens. The first applicant, Mrs Margaret Murray, and the second applicant, Mr Thomas Murray, are husband and wife. The other four applicants (Mark, Alana, Michaela and Rossina Murray) are their children. At the relevant time in 1982 all six applicants resided together in the same house in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

In June 1982 two of the first applicant's brothers were convicted in the United States of America ("USA") of arms offences connected with the purchase of weapons for the Provisional Irish Republican Army ("Provisional IRA").

Mrs Murray was arrested by the Army at the family home in Belfast at 7.00 a.m. on 26 July 1982, under section 14 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. This provision, as construed by the domestic courts, empowered the Army to arrest and detain for up to four hours a person suspected of the commission of a criminal offence, provided that the suspicion of the arresting officer was honestly and genuinely held. According to the Army, Mrs Murray was arrested on suspicion of involvement in the collection of money for the purchase of arms for the Provisional IRA in the USA. While she was dressing, the other applicants were roused and asked to assemble in the living room. The soldiers in the meantime recorded details concerning the applicants and their home. On being asked twice by Mrs Murray under what section of the legislation she was being arrested, the arresting officer, a woman corporal, replied, "Section 14".

Mrs Murray was then taken to Springfield Road Army screening centre and detained two hours for questioning. She refused to answer any questions, save to give her name. At some stage during her stay at the centre she was photographed without her knowledge or consent. She was released at 9.45 a.m. without charge. In 1984 Mrs Murray brought an unsuccessful action before the High Court for false imprisonment and other torts against the Ministry of Defence.

Evidence was given by Mrs Murray and by the corporal. Mrs Murray acknowledged that she had been in contact with her brothers and had been to the USA. Although the corporal did not have a precise recollection of the interrogation of Mrs Murray at the Army centre, she remembered that questions had been asked about money and about America. The trial judge accepted the testimony of the corporal as being truthful. Mrs Murray appealed, again challenging the legality of her arrest and certain related matters in the Court of Appeal, which rejected her claims in February 1987. The Court of Appeal granted her leave to appeal to the House of Lords. This appeal was dismissed in May 1988.

The 1978 Act under which Mrs Murray was arrested forms part of the special legislation enacted in the United Kingdom in an attempt to deal with the threat of terrorist violence in Northern Ireland. Section 14 was replaced in 1987 by a provision requiring that an arrest be based on reasonable suspicion.

#### **Law – Article 5 § 1 of the Convention**

Mrs Murray argued that, contrary to paragraph 1 (c) of Article 5, she had not been arrested on "reasonable suspicion" of having committed a criminal offence and that the purpose of her arrest and subsequent detention had not been to bring her before a competent legal authority.

It was relevant but not decisive that the domestic legislation at the time provided for an honest and genuine, rather than reasonable, suspicion. Having a "reasonable suspicion" presupposed the existence of facts or information which would satisfy an objective observer that the person concerned might have committed the offence.

The level of "suspicion" required was not the same as that for the bringing of a charge. In this respect, the length of the deprivation of liberty at risk (a maximum of four hours under section 14 of the 1978 Act) might also be material.

What could be regarded as "reasonable" in relation to a suspicion depended on all the circumstances of the particular case. In view of the difficulties inherent in the investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences in Northern Ireland, the "reasonableness" of the suspicion justifying such arrests could not always be judged according to the same standards that were applied when dealing with conventional crime. Contracting States could not be asked to establish the reasonableness of the suspicion grounding the arrest of a suspected terrorist by disclosing information or facts leading to confidential sources, thereby placing the lives and safety of others in danger. The Court accepted that the power of arrest granted to the Army by section 14 of the 1978 Act represented a bona fide attempt by a democratically elected parliament to deal with terrorist crime under the rule of law; and it was prepared to attach some credence to the United Kingdom Government's declaration as to the existence of reliable but confidential information grounding the suspicion against Mrs Murray. Nonetheless, the Court had to be furnished with at least some facts or information capable of satisfying it that the arrested person was reasonably suspected of having committed the alleged offence, particularly where domestic law had set a lower threshold by merely requiring honest suspicion.

In that connection, the Court had regard to relevant findings of fact made by the domestic courts in the civil proceedings brought by Mrs Murray, to the recent conviction of her brothers in the USA of offences connected with the purchase of arms for the Provisional IRA, to her visits to the USA and her contacts with her brothers there, and to the collaboration with "trustworthy" persons residing in Northern Ireland which was implied in the offences of which her brothers were convicted.

The Court concluded that, in the particular circumstances, there did exist sufficient facts or information which would provide a plausible and objective basis for a suspicion that Mrs Murray may have committed the offence of involvement in the collection of funds for the Provisional IRA.

In Mrs Murray's submission it was clear from the surrounding circumstances that she had not been arrested for the purpose of bringing her before the "competent legal authority" but merely for the purpose of interrogating her with a view to gathering general intelligence.

The domestic courts, after hearing witnesses, had found that the purpose of her arrest had been to establish facts concerning the offence of which she was suspected. No cogent elements had been produced in the proceedings before the Convention institutions which could lead the Court to depart from that finding of fact. It could be assumed that, had the suspicion against Mrs Murray been confirmed, she would have been charged with a criminal offence and brought before a court. Her arrest and detention had therefore been affected for the purpose specified in paragraph 1 (c) of Article 5.

## **Law – Article 5 § 2 of the Convention**

Mrs Murray submitted that at no time during her arrest or detention had she been given any or sufficient information as to the grounds for her arrest.

The Court pointed out that whether the content and promptness of the information conveyed were sufficient had to be assessed in each case according to its special features. Whilst the reasons for the arrest had not been sufficiently indicated when Mrs Murray was taken into custody, they had been brought to her attention during her subsequent interrogation. Moreover, the interval of a few hours that had elapsed between arrest and interrogation could not be regarded as falling outside the constraints of time imposed by the notion of promptness.

## **Law – Article 8**

All six applicants claimed to be the victims of a violation of Article 8. They complained about the entry into and search of their family home by the Army, including the confinement of the family members other than Mrs Murray for a short while in one room. Mrs Murray also objected to the recording (at the Army centre) of personal details concerning herself and her family, as well as the photograph which was taken of her without her knowledge or consent.

The Court held, however, that the resultant interferences with the applicants' exercise of their right to respect for their private and family life and their home were justified under paragraph 2 of Article 8.

In the first place each of the various measures complained of was found to have been "in accordance with the law".

The Court further considered that the measures, which pursued the legitimate aim of the prevention of crime, were "necessary in a democratic society". In striking the balance between the exercise by the individual of the right guaranteed to him or her under Article 8 § 1 and the necessity for the State to take effective measures for the prevention of terrorist crime, regard had to be had to the responsibility of an elected government in a democratic society to protect its citizens and its institutions against the threats posed by organised terrorism and to the special problems involved in the arrest and detention of persons suspected of terrorist-linked offences.

The domestic courts had rightly adverted to the conditions of extreme tension under which such arrests in Northern Ireland had to be carried out. As regards the entry and search, the means employed by the authorities could not be considered to have been disproportionate to the legitimate aim pursued. A similar conclusion was arrived at as regards the recording and retaining of personal details, including the photograph of Mrs Murray.

## **Law – Article 13 of the Convention**

Mrs Murray submitted that, contrary to Article 13, she had had no remedy under domestic law in respect of her claims under Articles 5 and 8.

The Court first held that it was not necessary to examine under Article 13 her complaint concerning remedies for her claims as to arrest, detention and lack of information about the reasons for her arrest (Article 5 §§ 1 and 2), since she had at no stage raised any complaint under Article 5 § 4, the Convention provision which sets forth a specific entitlement to a remedy in relation to arrest and detention.

In relation to her claims as to entry and search and as to the taking and retention of a photograph and personal details (Article 8), the Court found that in both these regards effective remedies were available to her under

domestic law. Her feeble prospects of success in the light of the particular circumstances of her case did not detract from the effectiveness of the remedies for the purpose for the purpose of Article 13.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Articles 5, 8 and 13

### **Separate Opinions**

The joint dissenting opinion of three judges and the partly dissenting opinions of two other judges are annexed to the judgment.

**8. *Eur. Court of HR, McMichael v. The United Kingdom*, judgment of 24 February 1995, application no. 16424/90. The applicant complained about the non-disclosure to them of some confidential documents submitted in care proceedings.**

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**no. 16424/90**  
**24.02.1995**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **MCMICHAEL v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Non-disclosure to the applicants of some confidential documents submitted in care proceedings gave rise to violations of the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

The applicants, Mr Antony and Mrs Margaret McMichael, live in Glasgow, Scotland. On 29 November 1987 the second applicant gave birth to a son, A. The applicants were not then married and Mr McMichael was not named on the birth certificate as the father of the child.

As the mother suffered from a mental illness, A. was taken into care on 11 December 1987 at the request of the Strathclyde Regional Council. The case was brought before a children's hearing on 17 December but postponed to a later date. The function of the children's hearing is to decide whether a child requires compulsory measures of care and, if so, which measures are appropriate. The second applicant, but not the first applicant who did not have parental rights, had the status of a party to the proceedings before the children's hearing.

On the 18 February 1988, Mr McMichael's name was added to the birth certificate, but this did not give him parental rights. He did not, in his capacity as natural father of A., ever make an application for an order for parental rights - an application which, at least as from 18 February 1988, would have been dealt with speedily, given the mother's consent.

From December 1987 onwards, the children's hearing took a number of decisions determining the custody and access arrangements in relation to A., notably continuing the compulsory measure of care, placing A. with foster parents and refusing the applicant's access to A. On two occasions (4 February and 13 October 1988) when the second applicant attended with the first applicant acting as her representative, the children's hearing had before it certain documents (including social reports on A.) which - pursuant to the applicable procedural rules - were not disclosed to the applicants but the substance of which was explained to them.

The second applicant appealed to the Sheriff Court against the decision of 4 February 1988 by the children's hearing but she subsequently abandoned the appeal. She also appealed against a decision of 5 September 1989 by the children's hearing - a hearing at which similar non-disclosure of a report on A. had occurred. This

appeal was upheld and the case remitted to the children's hearing. It would appear that, in accordance with the usual practice, in both appeals documents lodged with the Sheriff Court were not made available to her.

The applicants were married on 24 April 1990 and Mr McMichael thereby obtained parental rights. However, at the request of the Regional Council, A. was freed for adoption on 14 October 1990, the competent court having decided to dispense with the applicants' consent on the basis that they were unreasonably withholding it. On 25 May 1993 the court granted an application by the foster parents to adopt A.

### **Law – Article 6 § 1**

The Court had no jurisdiction to entertain the applicants' reiterated complaints under Article 8 concerning the merits of the care, access and adoption measures, since these complaints had been declared inadmissible at the outset by the Commission.

In the particular circumstances the Court did not consider it necessary to rule whether the scope of the case as referred to the Court extended to a further complaint, not dealt with in the Commission's report or admissibility decision, concerning the fairness of the adoption proceedings. The Court ruled that it was not precluded from taking cognisance of certain material, submitted by the Government, to which the applicants had objected.

The applicants alleged violation of Article 6 § 1 (the right to a fair trial in the determination of one's "civil rights") by reason of both applicants' inability to have sight of certain documents submitted in the care proceedings concerning their child, A.

It was not contested that in relation to the second applicant (Mrs McMichael) Article 6 § 1 was applicable to the care proceedings before the children's hearing and the Sheriff Court. However, the Court held that Article 6 § 1 had no application to the complaint of the first applicant (Mr McMichael). He had not sought to obtain legal recognition of his status as (natural) father of A. As a consequence, he had not been a party along with the mother in the care proceedings. Those proceedings had not therefore involved the determination of any of his "civil rights" under Scots law in respect of A.

The Government conceded the absence of a fair trial before the children's hearing on 4 February and 13 October 1988 and before the Sheriff Court.

As regards the children's hearing the Court recognised that in this sensitive domain of family law there may be good reasons for opting for an adjudicatory body that does not have the composition or procedures of a court of law of the classic kind. Nevertheless, the right to a fair - adversarial - trial means the opportunity to have knowledge of and comment on the observations filed or evidence adduced by the other party. The lack of disclosure to Mrs McMichael of such vital documents as social reports was capable of affecting her ability not only to influence the outcome of the children's hearing in question but also to assess the prospects of making an appeal to the Sheriff Court.

As a matter of practice certain documents (notably social reports) lodged with the Sheriff Court were not made available to appellant parents. The requirement of an adversarial trial had not been fulfilled before the Sheriff Court, any more than it had been on the relevant occasions before the children's hearing. In sum, Mrs McMichael had not received a "fair hearing" within the meaning of Article 6 § 1 at either of the two stages of the care proceedings.

### **Law – Article 8**

The applicants further alleged a violation of their right to respect for their family life under Article 8 by reason of the non-disclosure to both them of the confidential documents submitted in the care proceedings.

Whilst Article 8 contains no explicit procedural requirements, the decision-making process leading up to measures of interference with family life (such as care, custody and access measures concerning children) must be fair and such as to afford due respect to the interests protected by the Article.

Mr McMichael had not been associated in the care proceedings as a party, as he could have been. However, the two members of the applicant couple had acted very much in concert in their endeavour to recover custody of and have access to A. They were living together and leading a joint "family life". The Court did not deem it appropriate therefore to draw any material distinction between them as regards the interference with their family life resulting from the care proceedings, notwithstanding some differences in their legal circumstances.

The Court pointed to the difference in the nature of the interests protected by Articles 6 § 1 and 8 when judging that, despite its earlier finding of a violation of Article 6 § 1, examination of the same set of facts also under Article 8 was justified.

The unfair character of the care proceedings on specified occasions had already been conceded by the Government. Taking note of this concession, the Court found that in this respect the decision-making process determining the custody and access arrangements in regard to A. did not afford the requisite protection of the applicants' interests as safeguarded by Article 8.

#### **Law – Article 14**

The first applicant claimed that he had been a victim of discriminatory treatment in breach of Article 14, taken together with Article 6 § 1 and/or Article 8, by reason of his lack of legal right, prior to his marriage, to custody of A. or to participate in the care proceedings.

According to the Court's case-law, a difference of treatment is discriminatory if it has no reasonable and objective justification, that is, if it does not pursue a legitimate aim or if there is not a reasonable relationship of proportionality between the means employed and the aim sought to be realised.

Mr McMichael's complaint was essentially directed against his status as a natural father under Scots law. In the Court's view, the aim of the relevant legislation (to provide a mechanism for identifying "meritorious" fathers who might be accorded parental rights) is legitimate and the conditions imposed on natural fathers for obtaining legal recognition of their parental role respect the principle of proportionality. Mr McMichael had not therefore been discriminated against.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 6 § 1 and 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights in respect of the second applicant, Mrs McMichael, and of Article 8 in respect of the first applicant, Mr McMichael.

No violation of Articles 6 § 1 or 14 in respect of the first applicant.

#### **Article 50 (Just Satisfaction)**

The applicants, who were legally aided, did not make any claim for reimbursement of costs and expenses. They did however seek financial compensation for distress, sorrow and injury to health.

It could not be affirmed with certainty that no practical benefit would have accrued to the applicants if the procedural deficiency in the care proceedings had not existed. More importantly, some, although not the major part, of the evident trauma, anxiety and feeling of injustice experienced by both applicants in connection with the care proceeding was to be attributed to their inability to see the confidential documents in question. Payment of financial compensation was therefore warranted. The Court awarded the applicants jointly the sum of £8,000 under this head.

The applicants also asked for a number of declarations and consequential orders. The Court, however, ruled that it was not empowered to give the relief sought.

9. ***Eur. Court of HR, Z. v. Finland*, judgment of 25 February 1997, application no. 22009/93. The applicant complains about the seizure of medical records and their inclusion in investigation file without the patient's prior consent in criminal proceedings; the limitation of the duration of the confidentiality of the medical data concerned; the publication of her identity and HIV infection in a court judgment given in those proceedings.**
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**no. 22009/93**  
**25.02.1997**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **Z v. FINLAND**

The disclosure during court proceedings and judgement of the applicant's medical records, and the duration of the confidentiality order, violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant was at the time of the events which gave rise to her complaints under the Convention married to X. They divorced in September 1995. They are both infected with HIV.

Between December 1991 and September 1992 Mr X committed a number of sexual offences. Following a first conviction for rape on 10 March 1992, in respect of which he received a suspended prison sentence, Mr X was charged with, among other offences, attempted manslaughter on the ground that he had knowingly exposed his victims to the risk of HIV infection. On 19 March 1992 he had been informed of the results of a blood test showing that he was HIV positive.

In the course of the subsequent criminal proceedings in the Helsinki City Court, a number of doctors and a psychiatrist who had been treating the applicant were compelled, despite their protests, to give evidence concerning, and to disclose information about, the applicant. Mrs Z had herself refused to testify and the doctors' evidence was sought with a view to establishing the date at which Mr X first became aware, or had reason to suspect, that he was HIV positive. In addition, medical records relating to Mr X and Mrs Z were seized during a police search of the hospital where they were both receiving treatment and photocopies of the records were added to the case file. Although the proceedings were *in camera*, reports of the trial appeared in major newspapers on at least two occasions.

On 19 May 1993 the Helsinki City Court convicted Mr X, *inter alia*, on three counts of attempted manslaughter and one of rape and sentenced him to terms of imprisonment totalling seven years. The relevant legal provisions, the operative provisions of the judgment and a summary of the court's reasoning were made public. The court ordered that the full judgment and the case-documents should remain confidential for ten years despite requests from Mr X and his victims for a longer period of confidentiality. The prosecution, Mr X and the victims all appealed and, at a hearing of the Court of Appeal on 14 September 1993, requested that the court documents should remain confidential for longer than ten years.

In a judgment of 10 December 1993, the Court of Appeal upheld the conviction of X on three counts of attempted manslaughter and, in addition, convicted him on two further such counts. It increased the total sentence to more than eleven years. The judgment, which gave the names of Mrs Z and Mr X in full and went into the circumstances of their HIV infection, was made available to the press. The Court of Appeal did not extend the period of confidentiality fixed by the first-instance court. Its judgment was widely reported in the press.

On 26 September 1994 the Supreme Court refused Mr X leave to appeal.

On 1 September 1995 the Supreme Court dismissed an application by the applicant for an order quashing or reversing the Court of Appeal's judgment in so far as it concerned the ten-year limitation on the confidentiality order. The court documents in the case are due to become public in the year 2002.

### **Law – Article 8**

It was not established that there had been a leak of confidential medical data concerning the applicant for which the respondent State could be held responsible under Article 8 of the Convention. Nor did the Court have jurisdiction to entertain the applicant's allegation that she had been subjected to discriminatory treatment. It therefore confined its examination to the other matters complained of.

The various measures complained of constituted interferences with the applicant's right to respect for her private and family life. There was nothing to suggest that the measures did not comply with domestic law or that the relevant law was not sufficiently foreseeable in its effects for the purposes of the quality requirement which was implied by the expression "in accordance with the law" in paragraph 2 of Article 8.

The orders requiring the applicant's medical advisers to give evidence, the seizure of her medical records and their inclusion in the investigation file were aimed at the "prevention of ... crime" and the "protection of the rights and freedoms of others". The ten-year limitation on the confidentiality order could be said to have been aimed at protecting the "rights and freedoms of others", but not at the prevention of crime. On the other hand, the Court had doubts as to whether the publication of the applicant's full name as well as her medical condition following their disclosure in the Court of Appeal's judgment pursued any of the legitimate aims enumerated in paragraph 2 of Article 8, but deemed it unnecessary to decide the issue.

In determining whether the impugned measures were "necessary in a democratic society", the Court took into account that the protection of personal data, not least medical data, was of fundamental importance to a person's enjoyment of his or her right to respect for private and family life as guaranteed by Article 8. Respecting the confidentiality of health data was a vital principle in the legal systems of all the Contracting Parties to the Convention. It was crucial not only to respect the sense of privacy of a patient but also to preserve his or her confidence in the medical profession and in the health services in general.

The above considerations were especially valid as regards protection of the confidentiality of information about a person's HIV infection, the disclosure of which could dramatically affect his or her private and family life, as well as social and employment situation, by exposing him or her to opprobrium and the risk of ostracism. For this reason, it could also discourage persons from seeking diagnosis or treatment and thus undermine any preventive efforts by the community to contain the pandemic. The interests in protecting the confidentiality of such information would therefore weigh heavily in the balance in determining whether the interference was proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued. Such interference could not be compatible with Article 8 of the Convention unless it was justified by an overriding requirement in the public interest.

Against this background, the Court examined each measure in turn, whilst noting at the outset that the decision-making process did not give rise to any misgivings and that remedies were apparently available for challenging the seizure and for having the limitation on the confidentiality order quashed.

The orders requiring the applicant's medical advisers to give evidence had been made in the context of Z availing herself of her right under Finnish law not to give evidence against her husband. The object was exclusively to ascertain from her medical advisers when X had become aware of or had reason to suspect his HIV infection. Their evidence had been at the material time potentially decisive for the question whether X was guilty of attempted manslaughter in relation to two offences committed prior to 19 March 1992, when the positive results of the HIV test had become available. There could be no doubt that very

weighty public interests militated in favour of the investigation and prosecution of X for attempted manslaughter in respect of all of the five offences concerned and not just three of them. The resultant interference with the applicant's private and family life was moreover subjected to important safeguards against abuse. There was no reason to question the extent to which the doctors were required to testify. Especially because the proceedings were confidential and were highly exceptional, the contested orders were unlikely to have deterred potential and actual HIV carriers from undergoing blood tests and from seeking medical treatment. Accordingly, the Court, by eight votes to one, found no violation on this point.

The seizure of the applicant's medical records and their inclusion in the investigation file were complementary to the orders compelling her medical advisers to give evidence. Their context and object were the same and they were based on the same weighty public interests. Furthermore, they were subject to similar limitations and safeguards against abuse. Admittedly, unlike those orders, the seizure had not been authorised by a court but had been ordered by the prosecution. However, this fact could not give rise to any breach of Article 8 since the conditions for the seizure were essentially the same as those for the orders to testify, two of which had been given by the City Court prior to the seizure and the remainder shortly thereafter. Also, it would have been possible for the applicant to challenge the seizure before the City Court. There was no reason to doubt the national authorities' assessment that it was necessary to seize all the material concerned and to include it in the investigation file. Therefore, the Court, by eight votes to one, found no violation on this point either.

The ten-year limitation on the confidentiality order did not correspond to the wishes or interests of the parties in the proceedings, all of whom had requested a longer period of confidentiality.

The Court was not persuaded that, by prescribing such a short period, the domestic courts had attached sufficient weight to the applicant's interests. As a result of the information in issue having been produced in the proceedings without her consent, she had already been subjected to a serious interference with her right to respect for private and family life. The further interference which she would suffer if the medical information were to be made accessible to the public after ten years was not supported by reasons which could be considered sufficient to override her interest in the data remaining confidential for a longer period. The Court unanimously concluded that the order to make the material accessible as early as 2002 would, if implemented, amount to a disproportionate interference with her right to respect for her private and family life, in violation of Article 8.

The disclosure of the applicant's identity and HIV infection in the text of the Court of Appeal's judgment made available to the press was not supported by any cogent reasons. Accordingly, the Court unanimously found that the publication of the information concerned gave rise to a violation of the applicant's right to respect for her private and family life as guaranteed by Article 8.

The Court, having taken the applicant's allegations as to the lack of remedies into account in relation to Article 8, did not find it necessary to examine them under Article 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8 with regards to an order to make the medical data concerned accessible to the public as early as 2002, if implemented, and with regard to the publication of the applicant's identity and medical condition in a court of appeal judgment.

No violation of Article 8 in respect of orders requiring the applicant's medical advisers to give evidence or with regard to the seizure of her medical records and their inclusion in the investigation file in criminal proceedings against her husband.

## **Article 50 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant FIM 100,000 for non-pecuniary damage. The Court also allowed in part (FIM 160,000) the applicant's claim for costs and expenses, plus any applicable VAT, less FRF 10,835 paid in legal aid by the Council of Europe.

## **Separate Opinion**

One judge expressed a partly dissenting opinion and this is annexed to the judgment.

**10. Eur. Court of HR, Halford v. The United Kingdom, judgment of 25 June 1997, application no. 20605/92. The applicant complains that telephone calls made from her office in Merseyside Police Headquarters had been intercepted and that she had not had available to her any effective remedy for this complaint.**

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**no. 20605/92**  
**25.06.1997**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **HALFORD v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The interception of telephone calls made on internal telecommunications system operated by police and on public network and the lack of regulation by domestic law violated the Convention

## **Basic Facts**

Ms Alison Halford was born in 1940 and lives in the Wirral.

In May 1983 she was appointed Assistant Chief Constable with the Merseyside Police and as such was the highest-ranking female police officer in the United Kingdom. After she had failed on several occasions to be appointed to a more senior post, in 1990 she commenced proceedings against the Home Office and Merseyside Police Authority in the Industrial Tribunal alleging discrimination on grounds of sex. She withdrew her complaint in August 1992, following an agreement under which she was to retire from the police force and receive *ex gratia* payments totalling £15,000.

Ms Halford alleges that certain members of the Merseyside Police Authority launched a "campaign" against her in response to her discrimination complaint. This took the form *inter alia* of leaks to the press, the bringing of disciplinary proceedings against her and the interception of her telephone calls. For the purposes of the case before the Court, the Government accepted that there was a reasonable likelihood that calls made from her office telephones had been intercepted, but did not accept that any such likelihood had been established in relation to calls made from her home telephone.

In December 1991, Ms Halford complained to the Interception of Communications Tribunal. In February 1992 the Tribunal informed her that it was satisfied that there had been no contravention of the Interception of Communications Act 1985 in relation to her home telephone, but, under the terms of the Act, it was not empowered to specify whether this was because there had been no interception, or because there had been an interception which had been carried out pursuant to a warrant in accordance with the Act. In a letter to David Alton MP, Ms Halford's Member of Parliament, the Home Office explained that

eavesdropping by the Merseyside Police on their own internal telephone system fell outside the scope of the 1985 Act and would not require a warrant.

### **Law – Article 8**

It was clear from the Court's case-law that telephone calls made from business premises as well as from the home might be covered by the notions of "private life" and "correspondence" within the meaning of Article 8 § 1.

There was no evidence of any warning having been given to Ms Halford, as a user of the internal telecommunications system operated at the Merseyside Police Headquarters that calls made on that system would be liable to interception and the Court considered that she would have had a reasonable expectation of privacy for such calls.

Article 8 was therefore applicable to the complaints relating to both the office and home telephones.

#### The office telephones:

There was a reasonable likelihood, as the Government had conceded, that calls made by Ms Halford from her office had been intercepted by the Merseyside Police, probably with the primary aim of gathering material to assist in the defence of the sex discrimination proceedings brought against them. This constituted an "interference by a public authority", within the meaning of Article 8 § 2.

The Interception of Communications Act 1985 did not apply to internal communications systems operated by public authorities, such as that at Merseyside Police Headquarters, and there was no other provision in domestic law to regulate the interception of calls on such systems. Since English law provided no protection to Ms Halford, it could not be said that the interference was "in accordance with the law" as required by Article 8. There had therefore been a violation of that Article.

#### The home telephone

The Court did not consider that the evidence established a reasonable likelihood that calls made on the telephone in Ms Halford's home had been intercepted. In view of this conclusion, it did not find a violation of Article 8 in relation to the home telephone.

### **Law – Article 13**

The Court found a violation of Article 13 in respect of Ms Halford's complaint about the interception of calls made on her office telephones, in view of the fact that the Interception of Communications Act 1985 did not apply to the internal telephone system operated by the Merseyside Police and there was no other avenue in domestic law for her complaint.

It did not find a violation of Article 13 in relation to her complaint concerning her home telephone, because Article 13 only requires "an effective remedy before a national authority" in respect of arguable claims under the Convention. Ms Halford, however, had not adduced enough evidence to make out an arguable claim.

### **Law – Articles 10 and 14**

The allegations in relation to these Articles were tantamount to restatements of the complaints under Article 8. It was not therefore necessary for the Court to consider them.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8 and 13 with respect to the claims about the office telephones. No violation of Articles 8 and 13 with respect to claims about the applicant's home telephone

### **Article 50 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded Ms Halford £10,000 in compensation for the intrusion into her privacy, and £600 towards her personal expenses incurred in bringing the case to Strasbourg. It also awarded £25,000 of the £142,875 legal costs and expenses she had claimed.

**11. Eur. Court of HR, Anne-Marie Andersson v. Sweden, judgment of 27 August 1997, application no. 20022/92. The applicant complained of the impossibility for a patient, prior to the communication of personal and confidential medical data by medical authority to a social services authority, to challenge the measure before a court.**

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**no. 20022/92**  
**27.08.1997**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **ANNE-MARIE ANDERSSON v. SWEDEN**

The lack of possibility for a patient, prior to the communication of personal and confidential medical data by medical authority to a social services authority, to challenge the measure before a court did not violate the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant was born in 1943. She suffered from psychological and psychosomatic disorders which she attributed to court proceedings concerning her eviction from a flat. She also suffered from dental problems which aggravated her mental difficulties.

Following her eviction, she and her son, who was born in 1981, lived in several different flats allocated by the welfare authorities. As from May 1988 she was on sick leave.

In April 1989, as a result of the strain caused by her dental pains, she contacted a psychiatric clinic in Göteborg. From August 1991 she was treated by its Chief Psychiatrist, who on several occasions drew her attention to the possible detrimental effects of her situation on her son and advised her to seek assistance from the children's psychiatric clinic or the social welfare authorities. Apparently, the applicant did not do so.

In January 1992 the Chief Psychiatrist informed the applicant that, since the child's health might be at risk, she (the psychiatrist) had an obligation under Swedish law to contact the welfare authorities. Accordingly, the former, acting in accordance with a reporting obligation under the Social Services Act, informed the Social Council of the applicant's health problems. She notified the applicant that she had done so. In October 1991 the headmaster and a teacher of the son's school had expressed their concern to the Social Council about his learning difficulties and general state of health.

Following an investigation, the Council, with the applicant's consent, placed her son in a non-residential therapeutic school.

The applicant died on 20 November 1996.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court accepted that the applicant's son, Mr Stive Andersson, had sufficient interest to justify the continuation of its examination of the case. On the other hand, the applicant's complaint that the disclosure of the data in question amounted to a violation of her right to respect for private life under Article 8 had been declared inadmissible by the Commission; the Court had therefore no jurisdiction to entertain it.

### **Law – Article 6 § 1**

The Court had first to examine whether Article 6 § 1 was applicable to the disagreement between the applicant and the Swedish authorities as to the disclosure of her medical data.

The relevant rule on confidentiality in the Secrecy Act did not apply where a statutory obligation required the disclosure of information to another authority. In the case under consideration, if the chief psychiatrist possessed information about the applicant patient to the effect that intervention by the Social Council was necessary for the protection of her under age son, the psychiatrist was, according to the Social Services Act, under a duty to report immediately to the Social Council. That duty extended to all data in her possession which were potentially relevant to the Social Council's investigation into the need to take protective measures with respect to the son and depended exclusively on the relevance of those data.

In addition to the scope of this obligation, the Court noted that the psychiatrist enjoyed a very wide discretion in assessing what data would be of importance to the Social Council's investigation. In this regard, she had no duty to hear the applicant's views before transmitting the information to the Social Council.

Accordingly, it transpired from the terms of the legislation in issue that a "right" to prevent communication of such data could not, on arguable grounds, be said to be recognised under national law.

In view of the above, Article 6 § 1 was not applicable and had not been violated in the present case.

### **Law – Article 13**

A separate issue arose with regard to Article 13. That provision applied only in respect of grievances under the Convention which were arguable. Whether that was so in the case of the applicant's claim under Article 8 had to be determined in the light of the particular facts and the nature of the legal issues raised. In this connection, the Commission's decision on the admissibility of her complaint under Article 8 and the reasoning therein were not decisive but provided significant pointers. The Court for its part found, on the evidence adduced, that the applicant had no arguable claim in respect of a violation of the Convention. There had thus been no violation of Article 13.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Articles 6 § 1 and 13.

### **Separate Opinions**

Four judges expressed separate opinions and these are annexed to the judgment.

**12. Eur. Court of HR, M.S. v. Sweden, judgment of 27 August 1997, application no. 20837/92. The applicant maintained that the communication of her medical records by the clinic to the Social Insurance Office constituted a violation of her right to respect for private life under Article 8 of the Convention.**

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**no. 20837/92  
27.08.1997**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **M.S. v. SWEDEN**

The communication, without the patient's consent, of personal and confidential medical data by one public authority to another and lack of possibility for patient, prior to the measure, to challenge it before a court did not entail violation of Convention rights

#### **Basic Facts**

Ms M.S. was born in 1951 and lives in Sweden. On 9 October 1981 the applicant, who was pregnant at the time, allegedly injured her back while working at a day care centre. She attended the same day a women's clinic at the regional hospital.

Following this incident, the applicant was unable to return to work for any sustained period of time because of severe back pain. After she had been on the sick list for some time she was granted a temporary disability pension and, from October 1994, a disability pension.

In March 1991 she applied to the Social Insurance Office for compensation under the Industrial Injury Insurance Act. She claimed that, as a result of her back injury, she had been on sick leave for various periods between October 1981 and February 1991.

On receiving, at her own request, a copy of the file compiled by the Social Insurance Office, she learned that the Office had, for the purposes of examining her claim, obtained from the hospital medical records relating to the injury reported on 9 October 1981 and to treatment received thereafter. According to the records from October 1981, she had stated that she had had pains in her hips and back, but there was no indication that she considered herself to have been injured at work.

Records relating to the period from October 1985 to February 1986 concerned an abortion and subsequent treatment made necessary thereby.

In May 1992 the Social Insurance Office rejected the applicant's compensation claim, finding that her sick leave had not been caused by an industrial injury. The applicant appealed against this decision to the Social Insurance Board, which upheld it in August 1992. Further appeals by the applicant to the County Administrative Court, to the competent Administrative Court of Appeal and then to the Supreme

#### **Law – Article 8**

Under the Swedish system, the contested disclosure depended not only on the fact that the applicant had submitted her compensation claim to the Office but also on a number of factors beyond her control. It could not therefore be inferred from her request for compensation to the Office that she had waived in an unequivocal manner her right under Article 8 § 1 of the Convention to respect for private life with regard to the medical records at the clinic.

The medical records in question contained highly personal and sensitive data about the applicant, including information relating to an abortion. Although they remained confidential, they had been disclosed to another public authority and therefore to a wider circle of public servants. Moreover, the collection and storage of the information and its subsequent communication had served different purposes. The disclosure of the data by the clinic to the Office thus entailed an interference with the applicant's right to respect for private life guaranteed by paragraph 1 of Article 8.

The interference had a legal basis and was foreseeable; it was thus in accordance with the law. Since the communication of data was potentially decisive for the allocation of public funds to deserving claimants it could be said to have pursued the aim of protecting the economic well-being of the country.

The applicant's medical data were communicated by one public institution to another in the context of an assessment of whether she satisfied the legal conditions for obtaining a benefit which she herself had requested. The Office had a legitimate need to check information received from her against data in the possession of the clinic.

The claim concerned a back injury which she had allegedly suffered in 1981 and all the medical records produced by the clinic to the Office, including those concerning her abortion in 1985 and the treatment thereafter, contained information relevant to the applicant's back problems.

The applicant had not substantiated her allegation that the clinic could not reasonably have considered certain medical records to have been material to the Office's decision. In addition, the contested measure was subject to important limitations and was accompanied by effective and adequate safeguards against abuse.

In view of the above, there were relevant and sufficient reasons for the communication of the applicant's medical records by the clinic to the Office and the measure was not disproportionate to the legitimate aim pursued.

### **Law – Article 6 § 1**

The Court had first to examine whether Article 6 § 1 was applicable to the disagreement between the applicant and the Swedish authorities as to the disclosure of her medical records.

The relevant rule on confidentiality in the Secrecy Act did not apply where a statutory obligation required the disclosure of information to another authority. In the case under consideration, the clinic had, according to the Insurance Act, been under an obligation to supply the Office with information on the applicant concerning circumstances of importance to the application of the Act. Thus, the obligation incumbent on the imparting authority vis-à-vis the requesting authority depended exclusively on the relevance of the data in its possession; it comprised all data which the clinic had in its possession concerning the applicant and which were potentially relevant to the Office's determination of her compensation claim.

In addition to the scope of this obligation, the Court noted that the clinic enjoyed a very wide discretion in assessing what data would be of importance to the application of the Insurance Act. In this regard, it had no duty to hear the applicant's views before transmitting the information to the Office.

Accordingly, it appeared from the very terms of the legislation in issue that a "right" to prevent communication of such data could not, on arguable grounds, be said to be recognised under national law.

Having regard to the foregoing, Article 6 § 1 was not applicable and had not been violated in the present case.

## Law – Article 13

A separate issue arose under Article 13. Having regard to its findings under Article 8, the Court was satisfied that the applicant had had an arguable claim for the purposes of Article 13. It remained to examine whether she had been afforded an effective remedy.

In this regard, it was open to her to bring criminal and civil proceedings before the ordinary courts against the relevant staff of the clinic and to claim damages for breach of professional secrecy.

Thus, the applicant had had access to an authority empowered both to deal with the substance of her Article 8 complaint and to grant her relief. Having regard to the limited nature of the disclosure and to the different safeguards, in particular the Office's obligation to secure and maintain the confidentiality of the information, the various *ex post facto* remedies referred to satisfy the requirements of Article 13. Accordingly, there had been no violation of that provision.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Articles 8, 6 § 1 and 13.

**13. Eur. Court of HR, Lambert v. France, judgment of 24 August 1998, application no. 23618/94. Judgment whereby Court of Cassation refused a person *locus standi* to complain of interception of some of his telephone conversations, on the ground that it was a third party's line that had been tapped.**

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**no. 23618/94**

**24.08.1998**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **LAMBERT v. FRANCE**

Court of Cassation's refusal to grant a person *locus standi* to complain of interception of some of his telephone conversations violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Mr Michel Lambert, a French national, was born in 1957 and lives at Buzet-sur-Tarn.

In the course of an investigation into offences of theft, burglary, handling the proceeds of theft and aggravated theft, and unlawful possession of class 4 weapons and ammunition, an investigating judge at Riom issued a warrant on 11 December 1991 instructing the gendarmerie to arrange for the telephone line of a certain R.B. to be tapped until 31 January 1992. By means of standard-form written instructions ("*soit transmis*") dated 31 January, 28 February and 30 March 1992 the judge extended the duration of the telephone tapping until 29 February, 31 March and 31 May 1992 respectively. As a result of the interception of some of his conversations, the applicant was charged with handling the proceeds of aggravated theft. He was held in custody from 15 May to 30 November 1992, when he was released subject to judicial supervision.

On 5 April 1993 the applicant's lawyer applied to the Indictment Division of the Riom Court of Appeal for a ruling that the extensions of 31 January and 28 February 1992 were invalid, arguing that they had been ordered merely by standard-form written instructions without any reference to the offences

justifying the telephone tapping. The Indictment Division dismissed the application in a judgment of 25 May 1993.

The applicant appealed on a point of law, relying solely on a violation of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In a judgment of 27 September 1993, the Court of Cassation affirmed the decision appealed against. It held that “the applicant had no *locus standi* to challenge the manner in which the duration of the monitoring of a third party’s telephone line was extended” and that accordingly “the grounds of appeal, which contest[ed] the grounds on which the Indictment Division [had] wrongly considered it must examine [the] objections of invalidity and subsequently dismissed them, [were] inadmissible”.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court pointed out that as telephone conversations were covered by the notions of “private life” and “correspondence” within the meaning of Article 8, the admitted measure of interception had amounted to “interference by a public authority” with the exercise of a right secured to the applicant in paragraph 1 of that Article. In that connection, it was of little importance that the telephone tapping in question had been carried out on the line of a third party.

The Court noted that the investigating judge had ordered the telephone tapping in question on the basis of Articles 100 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The interference complained of had therefore had a statutory basis in French law.

The second requirement which derived from the phrase “in accordance with the law” – the accessibility of the law – did not raise any problem in the instant case. The Court considered, as the Commission had done, that Articles 100 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure, inserted by the Act of 10 July 1991 on the confidentiality of telecommunications messages, laid down clear, detailed rules and specified with sufficient clarity the scope and manner of exercise of the relevant discretion conferred on the public authorities.

The Court considered that the interference had been designed to establish the truth in connection with criminal proceedings and therefore to prevent disorder.

It remained to be ascertained whether the interference had been “necessary in a democratic society” for achieving those objectives. The Court accordingly had to ascertain whether an “effective control” had been available to Mr Lambert to challenge the telephone tapping to which he had been made subject.

It noted firstly that the Court of Cassation in its judgment of 27 September 1993 had gone beyond the ground relied on by the applicant concerning the extension of the duration of the telephone tapping and had held that a victim of the tapping of a telephone line not his own had no standing to invoke the protection of national law or Article 8 of the Convention. It had concluded that in the instant case the Indictment Division had been wrong to examine the objections of invalidity raised by the applicant as the telephone line being monitored had not been his own.

Admittedly, the applicant had been able to avail himself of a remedy in respect of the disputed point in the Indictment Division, which had held that the investigating judge’s extension of the duration of the telephone tapping had been in accordance with Articles 100 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and it was not the Court’s function to express an opinion on the interpretation of domestic law, which was primarily for the national courts to interpret. However, the Court of Cassation, the guardian of national law, had criticised the Indictment Division for having examined the merits of Mr Lambert’s application.

As the Court had already said, the provisions of the Law of 1991 governing telephone tapping satisfied the requirements of Article 8 of the Convention and those laid down in the *Kruslin* and *Huvig* judgments. However, it had to be recognised that the Court of Cassation's reasoning could lead to decisions whereby a very large number of people were deprived of the protection of the law, namely all those who had conversations on a telephone line other than their own. That would in practice render the protective machinery largely devoid of substance.

That had been the case with the applicant, who had not enjoyed the effective protection of national law, which did not make any distinction according to whose line was being tapped.

The Court therefore considered that the applicant had not had available to him the "effective control" to which citizens were entitled under the rule of law and which would have been capable of restricting the interference in question to what was "necessary in a democratic society".

In view of the preceding conclusion, the Court did not consider that it needed to rule on the complaint under Article 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 50 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court considered that the applicant had undeniably sustained non-pecuniary damage and awarded him the sum of FRF 10,000 under this head, and awarded FRF 15,000 in respect of the costs and expenses.

**14. *Eur. Court of HR, Amann v. Switzerland*, judgment of 16 February 2000, application no. 27798/95. The applicant complained that the interception of the telephone call and the creation by the Public Prosecutor's Office of a card on him and the storage of that card in the Confederation's card index had violated Article 8**

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**no. 27798/95**

**16.02.2000**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **AMANN v. SWITZERLAND**

The recording of a telephone conversation and the creation of a card index and storing of data by the Public Prosecutor entailed a violation of the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Hermann Amann, a Swiss national, was born in 1940 and lives in Berikon (Switzerland).

In the early 1980s the applicant, who is a businessman, imported depilatory appliances into Switzerland which he advertised in magazines. On 12 October 1981 a woman telephoned the applicant from the former Soviet embassy in Berne to order a "Perma Tweez" depilatory appliance. That telephone call was intercepted by the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office ("the Public Prosecutor's Office"), which then requested the Intelligence Service of the police of the Canton of Zürich to carry out an investigation into the applicant.

In December 1981 the Public Prosecutor's Office filled in a card on the applicant for its national security card index on the basis of the report drawn up by the Zürich police. In particular, the card indicated that the applicant had been "identified as a contact with the Russian embassy" and was a businessman. It was numbered (1153:0) 614, that code meaning "communist country" (1), "Soviet Union" (153), "espionage established" (0) and "various contacts with the Eastern block" (614).

In 1990 the applicant learned of the existence of the card index kept by the Public Prosecutor's Office and asked to consult his card. He was provided with a photocopy in September 1990, but two passages had been blue-pencilled.

After trying in vain to obtain disclosure of the blue-pencilled passages, the applicant filed an administrative-law action with the Federal Court requesting, *inter alia*, 5,000 Swiss francs in compensation for the unlawful entry of his particulars in the card index kept by the Public Prosecutor's Office. In a judgment of 14 September 1994, which was served on 25 January 1995, the Federal Court dismissed his action on the ground that the applicant had not suffered a serious infringement of his personality rights.

## **Law – Article 8**

### As regards the telephone call

The Court considered that the measure in question, namely the interception by the Public Prosecutor's Office of the telephone call of 12 October 1981, amounted to an interference with the applicant's exercise of his right to respect for his private life and his correspondence.

The Court pointed out that such interference breached Article 8 unless it was "in accordance with the law", pursued one or more of the legitimate aims referred to in paragraph 2 of that provision and was, in addition, necessary in a democratic society to achieve those aims.

In determining the issue of lawfulness, the Court had to examine whether the impugned measure had a legal basis in domestic law and whether it was accessible and foreseeable to the person concerned. A rule was "foreseeable" if it was formulated with sufficient precision to enable any individual – if need be with appropriate advice – to regulate their conduct. With regard to secret surveillance measures, the Court reiterated that the "law" had to be particularly detailed.

The Court noted in the instant case that Article 1 of the Federal Council's Decree of 29 April 1958 on the Police Service of the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office and section 17(3) of the Federal Criminal Procedure Act ("FCPA"), on which the Government relied and according to which the Public Prosecutor's Office "shall provide an investigation and information service in the interests of the Confederation's internal and external security", were worded in terms too general to satisfy the requirement of "foreseeability". As regards sections 66 et seq. FCPA, which governed the monitoring of telephone communications, the Government were unable to establish that the conditions of application of those provisions had been complied with. The Court went on to observe that, in the Government's submission, the applicant had not been the subject of the impugned measure, but had been involved "fortuitously" in a telephone conversation recorded in the course of a surveillance measure taken against a third party. The primary object of sections 66 et seq. FCPA was the surveillance of persons suspected or accused of a crime or major offence or even third parties presumed to be receiving information from or sending it to such persons, but those provisions did not specifically regulate in detail the case of persons not falling into any of those categories.

The Court concluded, in the light of the foregoing, that the interference had not been "in accordance with the law". Accordingly, there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

### As regards the card

The Court reiterated firstly that the storing of data relating to the "private life" of an individual fell within the application of Article 8 § 1 of the Convention. It pointed out in this connection that the term "private life" must not be interpreted restrictively.

In the present case the Court noted that a card had been filled in on the applicant on which it was stated, *inter alia*, that he was a businessman and a "contact with the Russian embassy". The Court found that those details undeniably amounted to data relating to the applicant's "private life" and that, accordingly, Article 8 was applicable.

The Court then reiterated that the storing by a public authority of data relating to an individual amounted in itself to an interference within the meaning of Article 8. The subsequent use of the stored information had no bearing on that finding and it was not for the Court to speculate as to whether the information gathered was sensitive or not or as to whether the person concerned had been inconvenienced in any way.

The Court noted that in the present case it had not been disputed that a card containing data on the applicant's private life had been filled in by the Public Prosecutor's Office and stored in the Confederation's card index. There had therefore been an interference with the applicant's exercise of his right to respect for his private life.

Such interference breached Article 8 unless it was "in accordance with the law", pursued one or more of the legitimate aims referred to in paragraph 2 and was, in addition, necessary in a democratic society to achieve those aims.

The Court observed that in the instant case the legal provisions relied on by the Government, in particular the Federal Council's Decree of 29 April 1958 on the Police Service of the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, the Federal Criminal Procedure Act and the Federal Council's Directives of 16 March 1981 applicable to the Processing of Personal Data in the Federal Administration, did not contain specific and detailed provisions on the gathering, recording and storing of information. It also pointed out that domestic law, particularly section 66(1 *ter*) FCPA, expressly provided that documents which were no longer "necessary" or had become "purposeless" had to be destroyed; the authorities had failed to destroy the data they had gathered on the applicant after it had become apparent, as the Federal Court had pointed out in its judgment of 14 September 1994, that no criminal offence was being prepared.

The Court concluded, in the light of the foregoing, that there had been no legal basis for the creation of the card on the applicant and its storage in the Confederation's card index. Accordingly, there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

### **Law – Article 13**

The Court reiterated that Article 13 of the Convention requires that any individual who considers himself injured by a measure allegedly contrary to the Convention should have a remedy before a national authority in order both to have his claim decided and, if appropriate, to obtain redress. That provision did not, however, require the certainty of a favourable outcome.

The Court noted that in the instant case the applicant was able to consult his card as soon as he asked to do so in 1990. It also observed that the applicant had complained in his administrative-law action in the Federal Court that there had been no legal basis for the interception of the telephone call and the creation of his card and, secondly, that he had had no effective remedy against those measures. In that

connection the Court reiterated that the Federal Court had had jurisdiction to rule on those complaints and had duly examined them.

The Court concluded, in the light of the foregoing, that the applicant had therefore had an effective remedy under Swiss law. Accordingly, there had not been a violation of Article 13 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8. No violation of Article 13

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The applicant did not allege any pecuniary damage. However, he claimed 1,000 Swiss francs (CHF) for non-pecuniary damage. The Court held that the non-pecuniary damage had been adequately compensated by the finding of violations of Article 8 of the Convention.

The applicant also claimed CHF 7,082.15 in respect of his costs and expenses for the proceedings before the Convention institutions. The Court considered that the claim for costs and expenses was reasonable and that it should be allowed in full.

**15. Eur. Court of HR, Rotaru v. Romania, judgment of 4 May 2000, application no. 28341/95. The applicant complained of an infringement of his right to private life in that the Romanian Intelligence Service held a file containing information on his private life and that it was impossible to refute the untrue information.**

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**no. 28341/95  
04.05.2000**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **ROTARU v. ROMANIA**

Storing and use of personal data held by the Romanian intelligence services and absence of the possibility of refuting their accuracy violated the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Aurel Rotaru, a Romanian national, was born in 1921 and lives in Bârlad (Romania).

In 1992 the applicant, who in 1948 had been sentenced to a year's imprisonment for having expressed criticism of the communist regime established in 1946, brought an action in which he sought to be granted rights that Decree no. 118 of 1990 afforded persons who had been persecuted by the communist regime. In the proceedings which followed in the Bârlad Court of First Instance, one of the defendants, the Ministry of the Interior, submitted to the court a letter sent to it on 19 December 1990 by the Romanian Intelligence Service, which contained, among other things, information about the applicant's political activities between 1946 and 1948. According to the same letter, Mr Rotaru had been a member of the Christian Students' Association, an extreme right-wing "legionnaire" movement, in 1937.

The applicant considered that some of the information in question was false and defamatory – in particular, the allegation that he had been a member of the legionnaire movement – and brought proceedings against the Romanian Intelligence Service, claiming compensation for the non-pecuniary damage he had sustained and amendment or destruction of the file containing the untrue information. The claim was dismissed by the Bârlad Court of First Instance in a judgment that was upheld by the Bucharest Court of Appeal on 15 December 1994. Both courts held that they had no power to order amendment or destruction

of the information in the letter of 19 December 1990 as it had been gathered by the State's former security services, and the Romanian Intelligence Service had only been a depositary.

In a letter of 6 July 1997, the Director of the Romanian Intelligence Service informed the Ministry of Justice that after further checks in their registers it appeared that the information about being a member of the "legionnaire" movement referred not to the applicant but to another person of the same name.

In the light of that letter the applicant sought a review of the Court of Appeal's judgment of 15 December 1994 and claimed damages. In a decision of 25 November 1997, the Bucharest Court of Appeal quashed the judgment of 15 December 1994 and declared the information about the applicant's past membership of the "legionnaire" movement null and void. It did not rule on the claim for damages.

The applicant complained of an infringement of his right to private life in that the Romanian Intelligence Service held a file containing information on his private life and that it was impossible to refute the untrue information. He relied on Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. He also complained of the lack of an effective remedy before a national authority which could rule on his application for amendment or destruction of the file containing untrue information and of the courts' refusal to consider his applications for costs and damages, which he said infringed his right to a court. He relied on Articles 13 and 6 of the Convention.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that the RIS's letter of 19 December 1990 contained various pieces of information about the applicant's life, in particular his studies, his political activities and his criminal record, some of which had been gathered more than fifty years earlier. In the Court's opinion, such information, when systematically collected and stored in a file held by agents of the State, fell within the scope of "private life" for the purposes of Article 8 § 1 of the Convention. Article 8 consequently applied.

The Court considered that both the storing of that information and the use of it, which were coupled with a refusal to allow the applicant an opportunity to refute it, had amounted to interference with his right to respect for family life as guaranteed by Article 8 § 1. If it was not to contravene Article 8, such interference had to have been "in accordance with the law", pursue a legitimate aim under paragraph 2 and, furthermore, be necessary in a democratic society in order to achieve that aim.

In that connection, the Court noted that in its judgment of 25 November 1997 the Bucharest Court of Appeal had confirmed that it was lawful for the RIS to hold the information as depositary of the archives of the former security services. That being so, the Court could conclude that the storing of information about the applicant's private life had had a basis in Romanian law.

As regards the requirement of foreseeability, the Court noted that no provision of domestic law laid down any limits on the exercise of those powers. Thus, for instance, domestic law did not define the kind of information that could be recorded, the categories of people against whom surveillance measures such as gathering and keeping information could be taken, the circumstances in which such measures could be taken or the procedure to be followed.

Similarly, the Law did not lay down limits on the age of information held or the length of time for which it could be kept.

Section 45 empowered the RIS to take over for storage and use the archives that had belonged to the former intelligence services operating on Romanian territory and allowed inspection of RIS documents with the Director's consent. The Court noted that the section contained no explicit, detailed provision

concerning the persons authorised to consult the files, the nature of the files, the procedure to be followed or the use that could be made of the information thus obtained.

It also noted that although section 2 of the Law empowered the relevant authorities to permit interferences necessary to prevent and counteract threats to national security, the ground allowing such interferences was not laid down with sufficient precision.

The Court also noted that the Romanian system for gathering and archiving information did not provide any safeguards, no supervision procedure being provided by Law no. 14/1992, whether while the measure ordered was in force or afterwards.

That being so, the Court considered that domestic law did not indicate with reasonable clarity the scope and manner of exercise of the relevant discretion conferred on the public authorities. The Court concluded that the holding and use by the RIS of information on the applicant's private life had not been "in accordance with the law", a fact that sufficed to constitute a violation of Article 8. Furthermore, in the instant case that fact prevented the Court from reviewing the legitimacy of the aim pursued by the measures ordered and determining whether they had been – assuming the aim to have been legitimate – "necessary in a democratic society".

### **Law – Article 13**

The Court noted that Article 54 of the decree provided for a general action in the courts, designed to protect non-pecuniary rights that had been unlawfully infringed. The Bucharest Court of Appeal, however, had indicated in its judgment of 25 November 1997 that the RIS was empowered by domestic law to hold information on the applicant that came from the files of the former intelligence services. The Government had not established the existence of any domestic decision that had set a precedent in the matter. It had therefore not been shown that such a remedy would have been effective. That being so, the relevant preliminary objection by the Government had to be dismissed.

As to the machinery provided in Law no. 187/1999, assuming that the council provided for was set up, the Court noted that neither the provisions relied on by the respondent Government nor any other provisions of that law made it possible to challenge the holding, by agents of the State, of information on a person's private life or the truth of such information. The supervisory machinery established by sections 15 and 16 related only to the disclosure of information about the identity of some of the *Securitate's* collaborators and agents.

The Court had not been informed of any other provision of Romanian law that made it possible to challenge the holding, by the intelligence services, of information on the applicant's private life or to refute the truth of such information.

### **Law – Article 6**

The applicant's claim for compensation for non-pecuniary damage and costs was a civil one within the meaning of Article 6 § 1 and the Bucharest Court of Appeal had had jurisdiction to deal with it. The Court accordingly considered that the Court of Appeal's failure to consider the claim had infringed the applicant's right to a fair hearing within the meaning of Article 6 § 1.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8, 13 and 6

## **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court considered that the sum of FRF 50,000 would afford fair redress for the non-pecuniary damage sustained.

The Court awarded the full amount claimed by the applicant, that is to say FRF 13,450, less the sum already paid by the Council of Europe in legal aid.

**16. *Eur. Court of HR, P.G. and J.H. v. the United Kingdom*, judgment of 25 September 2001, application no. 44787/98. The applicants complained about the use of covert listening devices to monitor and record their conversations at B's flat, the monitoring of calls from B's telephone and the use of listening devices to obtain voice samples while they were at the police station.**

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**no. 44787/98  
25.09.2001**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **P.G. AND J.H. v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The use of covert listening devices to monitor and record the applicants' conversations and to obtain their voice samples violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicants are both British nationals. On 28 February 1995, D.I. Mann received information that an armed robbery of a Securicor cash collection van was going to be committed on or around 2 March 1995 by the first applicant and B. at one of several possible locations. Visual surveillance of B.'s home began the same day. No robbery took place.

By 3 March, however, the police had been informed the robbery was to take place 'somewhere' on 9 March 1995. In order to obtain further details, D.I. Mann prepared a report applying for authorisation to install a covert listening device in B.'s flat. On 4 March 1995, the Chief Constable gave oral authorisation and a listening device was installed in a sofa in B.'s flat the same day; the Deputy Chief Constable gave retrospective written authorisation on 8 March 1995. On 14 March 1995, the police requested itemised billing for calls from the telephone in B.'s flat. On 15 March 1995, B. and others who were with him in his home discovered the listening device and abandoned the premises. The robbery did not take place.

The applicants were arrested on 16 March 1995 in a stolen car containing two black balaclavas, five black plastic cable ties, two pairs of leather gloves, and two army kitbags.

As they wished to obtain speech samples to compare with the tapes, the police applied for authorisation to use covert listening devices in the applicants' cells and to attach listening devices to the police officers who were to be present when the applicants were charged. Written authorisation was given by the Chief Constable and samples of the applicants' speech were recorded without their knowledge or permission. An expert concluded it was 'likely' the first applicant's voice featured on the taped recordings and 'very likely' the second applicant's voice featured on them.

B. and the applicants were charged with conspiracy to rob. During their trial, evidence derived from the use of the covert listening devices was deemed admissible and some documents, including parts of D.I. Mann's report, were withheld from the applicants and their lawyers. Oral evidence was also taken from D.I. Mann in the absence of the applicants or their lawyers. The applicants were convicted on 9 August 1996 of conspiracy to rob and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. Their application to the Court of Appeal for leave to appeal was rejected.

## **Law – Article 8**

### Use of a covert listening device at B.'s flat

Noting that the UK Government had conceded that the police surveillance of B's flat was not in accordance with the law existing at the time in question, the Court held that there had been a violation of Article 8.

### Obtaining information about the use of B.'s telephone

Observing that the information about the use of B.'s telephone was obtained and used in the context of an investigation and trial concerning a suspected conspiracy to commit armed robberies, the Court found that the measure was necessary in a democratic society. There had therefore been no violation of Article 8.

### Use of covert listening devices at the police station

Noting that, at the relevant time, there existed no statutory system to regulate the use of covert listening devices by the police on their own premises, the Court found the interference with the applicants' right to a private life was not in accordance with the law. There had therefore been a violation of Article 8.

## **Law – Article 6 § 1**

### Non-disclosure of evidence during the trial

The Court was satisfied that the defence were kept informed and permitted to make submissions and participate in the decision-making process as far as was possible without revealing to them the material which the prosecution sought to keep secret on public interest grounds. The questions which the defence counsel had wished to put to the witness D.I. Mann were asked by the judge in chambers. The Court also noted that the material which was not disclosed in the present case formed no part of the prosecution case whatever, and was never put to the jury. The fact that the need for disclosure was at all times under assessment by the trial judge provided a further, important safeguard in that it was his duty to monitor throughout the trial the fairness or otherwise of the evidence being withheld.

In conclusion, therefore, the Court found that, as far as possible, the decision-making procedure complied with the requirements of adversarial proceedings and equality of arms and incorporated adequate safeguards to protect the interests of the accused. It followed that there had been no violation of Article 6 § 1.

### Use of taped evidence obtained by covert surveillance devices

The Court observed that the taped evidence at the trial was not the only evidence against the applicants. Furthermore, they had had ample opportunity to challenge both the authenticity and the use of the recordings. It was also clear that, had the domestic courts been of the view that the admission of the evidence would have given rise to substantive unfairness, they would have had a discretion to exclude it. The Court further considered that there was no unfairness in leaving it to the jury, on the basis of a thorough summing-up by the judge, to decide where the weight of the evidence lay.

Insofar as the applicants complained that the way in which the voice samples were obtained infringed their right not to incriminate themselves, the Court considered that the voice samples, which did not include any incriminating statements, might be regarded as akin to blood, hair or other physical or objective specimens used in forensic analysis, to which the right did not apply. There had therefore been no violation of Article 6 § 1.

### **Law – Article 13**

The Court observed that the domestic courts were not capable of providing a remedy because it was not open to them either to deal with the complaint that the interference with the applicants' right to respect for their private lives was not in accordance with the law or to grant appropriate relief in connection with the complaint.

The Court further found that the system of investigation of complaints did not meet the standards of independence necessary to constitute sufficient protection against the abuse of authority and to provide an effective remedy within the meaning of Article 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8 and 13. No violation of Article 6 § 1

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded each applicant 1,000 pounds sterling (GBP) for non-pecuniary damage and a total of GBP 12,000 for costs and expenses.

**17. Eur. Court of HR, *M.G v. the United Kingdom*, judgment of 24 September 2002, application no. 39393/98. Requested access to applicant's social service records.**

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**no. 39393/98**  
**24.09.2002**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **M.G v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The failure to allow the applicant unimpeded access to all social service records relating to him violated the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

M.G., a United Kingdom national, was born in 1960 and lives in Leicester. He was in local authority voluntary care from: 8 September to 6 November 1961, 15 February to 20 July 1962, 26 October to 23 December 1962, 4 April 1963 to 4 April 1966 and 16 January to 8 April 1967. During these periods his

mother was receiving periodic psychiatric treatment and his father had some difficulty coping with the children on his own. M.G. had contact with both parents while in care.

By letter dated 10 April 1995, the applicant requested access to his social service records. By letters dated 5 and 9 June 1995, he requested specific information including whether he had ever been on the "risk register", whether his father had been investigated or convicted of crimes against children and about the responsibility of the local authority for abuse he had suffered as a child.

By letter dated 12 June 1996 to the local authority the applicant's legal representatives noted that the applicant had been provided with summary information and certain documents. They requested that he be allowed full access to his file. In reply, the local authority indicated that the social service records had been created prior to the entry into force of the Access to Personal Files Act 1987. Further to the applicant's queries, the local authority confirmed that there were no detailed records relating to him after 1967 and little mention of ill-treatment.

In his letter of 21 January 1997, the applicant stated that he was undergoing counselling for abuse he had received as a child and that he had consulted solicitors about a negligence action against the local authority. He requested specific information about allegations of ill-treatment made in November 1966 and about his being abused by his father for eight years thereafter.

The local authority responded by letter dated 17 February 1997, referring the applicant to the information already provided in 1995 and to the differences between social work standards and procedures in 1997 and in the 1960s.

The applicant complained, in particular, about inadequate disclosure by the local authority of his social service records, records which related to his time spent in local authority care. He pointed out that he had not yet received all his social service records and referred, in particular, to the period from April 1967 - 1976 for which he has received no records whatsoever. He maintained that the failure to allow him unimpeded access to all social service records relating to him during those periods constituted a violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life).

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that one of the main reasons the applicant sought access to his records was his sincere belief that he had been physically abused when he was a child by his father and his need to obtain as much information as possible about that period in order to come to terms with the emotional and psychological impact of any such abuse and to understand his own subsequent and related behaviour.

The Court observed that the applicant was only given limited access to his records in 1995, compared to the records submitted to the Court by the United Kingdom Government. In addition, he had no statutory right of access to those records or clear indication by way of a binding circular or legislation of the grounds upon which he could request access or challenge a denial of access. Most importantly, he had no appeal against a refusal of access to any independent body. The records disclosed by the Government demonstrated the need for such an independent appeal, given that significant portions of the records were blanked out and certain documents had been retained on the basis that non-disclosure was justified by the duty of confidence to third parties.

In such circumstances, the Court concluded that there had been a failure to fulfil the positive obligation to protect the applicant's private and family life in respect of his access to his social service records from April 1995. However, from 1 March 2000 (the date of entry into force of the Data Protection Act 1998) the applicant could have, but had not, appealed to an independent authority against the non-disclosure of certain records on grounds of a duty of confidentiality to third parties.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The applicant was awarded 4,000 euros (EUR) for non-pecuniary damage.

**18. Eur. Court of HR, Taylor-Sabori v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 22 October 2002, no. 47114/99. The applicant complained about the interception of pager messages by the police and subsequent reference to them at the trial.**

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**no. 47114/99**  
**22.10.2002**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**TAYLOR-SABORI v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The interception of pager messages by the police and subsequent reference to them at the trial violated Convention rights

**Basic Facts**

Sean-Marc Taylor-Sabori is a United Kingdom national. Between August 1995 and the applicant's arrest on 21 January 1996, he was kept under police surveillance. Using a "clone" of the applicant's pager, the police were able to intercept messages sent to him.

The applicant was arrested and charged with conspiracy to supply a controlled drug. The prosecution alleged that he had been a principal organiser in the importation to the United Kingdom from Amsterdam of over 22,000 ecstasy tablets worth approximately GBP 268,000. He was tried, along with a number of alleged co-conspirators, at Bristol Crown Court in September 1997.

Part of the prosecution case against the applicant consisted of the contemporaneous written notes of the pager messages, which had been transcribed by the police. The applicant's counsel submitted that these notes should not be admitted in evidence because the police had not had a warrant under section 2 of the Interception of Communications Act 1985 for the interception of the pager messages. However, the trial judge ruled that, since the messages had been transmitted via a private system, the 1985 Act did not apply and no warrant had been necessary.

The applicant pleaded not guilty. He was convicted and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. The applicant appealed against conviction and sentence. One of the grounds was the admission in evidence of the pager messages. The Court of Appeal, dismissing the appeal on 13 September 1998, upheld the trial judge's ruling that the messages had been intercepted at the point of transmission on the private radio system, so that the 1985 Act did not apply and the messages were admissible despite having been intercepted without a warrant.

The applicant complained, principally, under Articles 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and 13 (right to an effective remedy) that the interception of his pager messages by the police and

subsequent reference to them at his trial amounted to an unjustified interference with his private life and correspondence which was not "in accordance with the law" and in respect of which there was no remedy under English law.

### **Law – Articles 8 and 13**

The European Court of Human Rights noted that, at the time of the events in question, there was no statutory system to regulate the interception of pager messages transmitted via a private telecommunication system. It followed, as the Government had accepted, that the interference was not "in accordance with the law". The Court, therefore, held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 8.

Concerning Article 13, the Court recalled that in its finding in the case *Khan v. the United Kingdom* (application no. 35394/97, judgment 12/5/2000), in circumstances similar to those in the applicant's case, the courts in the criminal proceedings were not capable of providing a remedy because, although they could consider questions of the fairness of admitting the evidence in the criminal proceedings, it was not open to them to deal with the substance of the Convention complaint that the interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life was not "in accordance with the law"; still less, to grant appropriate relief in connection with the complaint. As it did not appear that there was any other effective remedy available to Mr Taylor-Sabori for his Article 8 complaint, the Court held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8 and 13

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court further held unanimously that the finding of a violation constituted sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage sustained by the applicant and awarded him EUR 4,800 for costs and expenses.

**19. Eur. Court of HR, Allan v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 5 November 2002, application no. 48539/99. The applicant complained of use of covert audio and video surveillance within a prison cell and the prison visiting area.**

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**no. 48539/99  
05.11.2002**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**ALLAN v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The use of covert audio and video surveillance within a prison cell and the prison visiting area violated Convention rights

**Basic Facts**

Richard Roy Allan is a United Kingdom national. On or about 20 February 1995, an anonymous informant told the police that Mr Allan had been involved in the murder of David Beesley, a store manager, who was shot dead in a Kwik-Save supermarket in Greater Manchester on 3 February 1995.

On 8 March 1995, the applicant was arrested for the murder. In the police interviews which followed, the applicant availed himself of his right to remain silent.

Around this time, recordings were made of the applicant's conversations with his female friend while in the prison visiting area and with his co-accused in the prison cell they shared.

On 23 March 1995, H., a long-standing police informant with a criminal record, was placed in the applicant's cell for the purpose of eliciting information from the applicant. The applicant maintains that H. had every incentive to inform on him. Telephone conversations between H. and the police included comments by the police instructing H. to "push him for what you can" and disclosed evidence of concerted police coaching. After 20 April 1995, he associated regularly with the applicant, who was remanded at Strangeways Prison.

On 25 July 1995, in a 59-60-page witness statement, H. claimed that the applicant had admitted his presence at the murder scene. This asserted admission was not part of the recorded interview and was disputed. No evidence, other than the alleged admissions, connected the applicant with the killing of Mr Beesley.

On 17 February 1998 the applicant was convicted of murder before the Crown Court at Manchester by a 10-2 majority and sentenced to life imprisonment. He appealed unsuccessfully.

The applicant complained of the use of covert audio and video surveillance within his cell, the prison visiting area and upon a fellow prisoner and of the use of materials gained by these means at his trial. He relied on Articles 6 (right to a fair trial), 8 (right to respect for private life) and 13 (right to an effective remedy).

## **Law – Articles 8, 6 and 13**

Recalling that, at the relevant time, there existed no statutory system to regulate the use of covert recording devices by the police, the European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been violations of Article 8 concerning the use of these devices.

The Government having accepted that the applicant did not enjoy an effective remedy in domestic law at the relevant time in respect of the violations of his right to private life under Article 8, the Court also held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 13.

Concerning the complaint under Article 6, the Court noted that, in his interviews with the police following his arrest, the applicant had, on the advice of his solicitor, consistently availed himself of his right to silence.

H., who was a longstanding police informer, had been placed in the applicant's cell and later at the same prison for the specific purpose of eliciting from the applicant information implicating him in the offences of which he was suspected. The evidence adduced at the applicant's trial showed that the police had coached H. The admissions allegedly made by the applicant to H. were not spontaneous and unprompted statements volunteered by the applicant, but were induced by the persistent questioning of H., who, at the instance of the police, had channelled their conversations into discussions of the murder in circumstances which could be regarded as the functional equivalent of interrogation, without any of the safeguards of a formal police interview, including the attendance of a solicitor and the issuing of the usual caution.

The Court considered that the applicant would have been subject to psychological pressures which impinged on the "voluntariness" of the disclosures that he had allegedly made to H.: he was a suspect in a murder case, in detention and under direct pressure from the police in interrogations about the murder, and would have been susceptible to persuasion to take H., with whom he shared a cell for some weeks, into his confidence. In those circumstances, the information gained by the use of H. in this way might be regarded as having been obtained in defiance of the will of the applicant and its use at trial to have impinged on the applicant's right to silence and privilege against self-incrimination. The Court, therefore, held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 6 concerning the admission at the applicant's trial of the evidence obtained through the informer H.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8, 6 and 13

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant EUR 1,642 for non-pecuniary damage and EUR 12,800 for costs and expenses. (The judgment is in English only.)

**20. Eur. Court of HR, Peck v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 28 January 2003, application no. 44647/98. The applicant complained about the disclosure of the CCTV footage to the media, which resulted in images of himself being published and broadcast widely, and about a lack of an effective domestic remedy.**

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**no. 44647/98**  
**28.01.2003**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**PECK v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Disclosure of CCTV footage of the applicant to the media violated the Convention

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Geoffrey Dennis Peck, is a United Kingdom national, who was born in 1955 and lives in Essex. On the evening of 20 August 1995, at a time when he was suffering from depression, Mr Peck walked alone down Brentwood High Street, with a kitchen knife in his hand, and attempted suicide by cutting his wrists. He was unaware that he had been filmed by a closed-circuit television (CCTV) camera installed by Brentwood Borough Council.

The CCTV footage did not show the applicant cutting his wrists; the operator was solely alerted to an individual in possession of a knife. The police were notified and arrived at the scene, where they took the knife, gave the applicant medical assistance and brought him to the police station, where he was detained under the Mental Health Act 1983. He was examined and treated by a doctor, after which he was released without charge and taken home by police officers.

On 9 October 1995 the Council issued two photographs taken from the CCTV footage with an article entitled “Defused – the partnership between CCTV and the police prevents a potentially dangerous situation”. The applicant’s face was not specifically masked. The article noted that an individual had been spotted with a knife in his hand, that he was clearly unhappy but not looking for trouble, that the police had been alerted, that the individual had been disarmed and brought to the police station where he was questioned and given assistance.

On 12 October 1995 the “Brentwood Weekly News” newspaper used a photograph of the incident on its front page to accompany an article on the use and benefits of the CCTV system. The applicant’s face was not specifically masked.

On 13 October 1995 an article entitled “Gotcha” appeared in the “Yellow Advertiser”, a local newspaper with a circulation of approximately 24,000. The article, accompanied by a photograph of the applicant taken from the CCTV footage, referred to the applicant having been intercepted with a knife and a potentially dangerous situation having being defused. It was noted that the applicant had been released without charge. On 16 February 1996 a follow-up article entitled “Eyes in the sky triumph” was published by the newspaper using the same photograph. It appears that a number of people recognised the applicant.

On 17 October 1995 extracts from the CCTV footage were included in an Anglia Television programme, a local broadcast to an average audience of 350,000. The applicant’s face had been masked at the Council’s oral request.

In late October or November 1995, the applicant became aware that he had been filmed on CCTV and that footage had been released because a neighbour said he had seen him on television. He did not take any action as he was still suffering from severe depression.

The CCTV footage was also supplied to the producers of "Crime Beat", a BBC series on national television with an average of 9.2 million viewers. The Council imposed orally a number of conditions, including that no one should be identifiable in the footage and that all faces should be masked.

However, in trailers for an episode of "Crime Beat", the applicant's image was not masked at all. After being told by friends that they had seen him on 9 March 1996 in the trailers, the applicant complained to the Council about the forthcoming programme. The Council contacted the producers who confirmed that his image had been masked in the main programme. On 11 March the CCTV footage was shown on "Crime Beat". However, although the applicant's image was masked in the main programme, he was recognised by friends and family.

The applicant made a number of media appearances thereafter to speak out against the publication of the footage and photographs.

### **Law – Article 8**

The applicant complained about the disclosure of the CCTV footage to the media, which resulted in images of himself being published and broadcast widely, and about a lack of an effective domestic remedy. He relied on Articles 8 and 13 of the Convention.

The Court observed that, following the disclosure of the CCTV footage, the applicant's actions were seen to an extent which far exceeded any exposure to a passer-by or to security observation and to a degree surpassing that which the applicant could possibly have foreseen. The disclosure by the Council of the relevant footage therefore constituted a serious interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life.

The Court did not find that there were relevant or sufficient reasons which would justify the direct disclosure by the Council to the public of stills of the applicant in "CCTV News", without the Council having obtained the applicant's consent or masking his identity, or which would justify its disclosures to the media without the Council taking steps to ensure so far as possible that his identity would be masked. Particular scrutiny and care was needed given the crime prevention objective and context of the disclosures.

Neither did the Court find that the applicant's later voluntary media appearances diminished the serious nature of the interference and nor did these appearances reduce the need for care concerning disclosures. The applicant was the victim of a serious interference with his right to privacy involving national and local media coverage: it could not therefore be held against him that he tried afterwards to expose and complain about that wrongdoing through the media.

Accordingly, the Court considered that the disclosures by the Council of the CCTV material in "CCTV News" and to the "Yellow Advertiser", Anglia Television and the BBC were not accompanied by sufficient safeguards and, therefore, constituted a disproportionate and unjustified interference with the applicant's private life and a violation of Article 8.

In the light of this finding, the Court did not consider it necessary to consider separately the applicant's other complaints under Article 8.

## **Law – Article 13 in conjunction with Article 8**

The Court found that judicial review did not provide the applicant with an effective remedy in relation to the violation of his right to respect for his private life.

In addition, the lack of legal power of the BSC and ITC to award damages to the applicant meant that those bodies could not provide an effective remedy to him. The ITC's power to impose a fine on the relevant television company did not amount to an award of damages to the applicant. And, although the applicant was aware of the Council's disclosures prior to the "Yellow Advertiser" article of February 1996 and the BBC broadcasts, neither the BSC nor the PCC had the power to prevent such publications or broadcasts.

The Court further found that the applicant did not have an actionable remedy for breach of confidence at the relevant time.

Finding, therefore, that the applicant had no effective remedy in relation to the violation of his right to respect for his private life, the Court concluded that there had been a violation of Article 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8 and 13

## **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant 11,800 euros (EUR) for non-pecuniary damage and EUR 18,075 for costs and expenses.

**21. *Eur. Court of HR, Cotlet v. Romania*, judgment of 3 June 2003, application no. 38565/97. The applicant complained under Article 8 of the Convention of interference with his correspondence with the Convention institutions. He also complained of a violation of his right of individual application, as guaranteed by Article 34 of the Convention.**

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**no. 38565/97**

**03.06.2003**

Press release issued by the Registrar

## **COTLET v. ROMANIA**

Interference with applicant's correspondence with the Convention institutions

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Silvestru Cotlet, is a Romanian national who was born in 1964 and lives at Gura-Humorului. The case concerns his difficulties in corresponding with the Convention institutions after lodging his application.

On 23 July 1992 he was convicted of murder by the Caraş-Severin County Court and sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment. He was sent to Drobeta Turnu-Severin Prison and subsequently transferred to penal institutions in Timișoara, Gherla, Jilava, Rahova, Craiova, Tg. Ocna and Mărgineni. He lodged an application with the European Commission of Human Rights from prison in November 1995 complaining about the allegedly unfair nature of the proceedings that had ended with his conviction.

The applicant complained under Article 8 of the Convention of interference with his correspondence with the Convention institutions, including delays in forwarding his letters to the Court and the Commission, the opening of his letters to those institutions, and the prison authorities' refusal to provide him with paper, envelopes and stamps for his letters to the Court. He also complained of a violation of his right of individual application, as guaranteed by Article 34 of the Convention.

## **Law – Article 8**

### Delays in forwarding the applicant's letters to the Commission and the Court

The Court noted that between November 1995 and October 1997 the applicant's correspondence had taken between 1 month and 10 days and 2 months and 6 days to reach its destination. Such delays amounted to an interference with his right to respect for his correspondence. Referring to its case-law, the Court observed that it had previously held that the Romanian legislation on the monitoring of prisoners' correspondence was incompatible with the requirement under Article 8 § 2 of the Convention for an interference to be "in accordance with the law". Consequently, finding that that requirement was not satisfied, the Court held that there had been a violation of the Convention under this head.

### Opening of the applicant's correspondence with the Commission and the Court

As regards the period up to 24 November 1997, when a decree was issued guaranteeing the confidentiality of prisoners' correspondence, the Court found that the fact that the applicant's letters had been opened amounted to an interference with his right to respect for his correspondence: that interference had been based on national provisions which had not amounted to a "law" for the purposes of Article 8 paragraph 2 of the Convention. Consequently, it held that there had been a violation of the Convention under that head.

With regard to the period after 24 November 1997, the Court noted that the facts were in dispute. The case file showed that the interference with the applicant's right to respect for his correspondence had continued. In the absence of any specific information from the parties on the point, the Court assumed that the basis for the interference was the Minister of Justice's decree of 24 November 1997. It noted that the decree was referred to under various different numbers and did not appear to have been published. Accordingly, the Court found that the interference was not "in accordance with the law" and that there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

### The prison authority's refusal to provide the applicant with writing materials for his correspondence with the Court

The Court noted that inherent in the right to respect for correspondence, as guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention, was the right to writing materials. It noted that several letters in which the applicant had related the difficulties he was experiencing had arrived in envelopes from other prisoners. The Court did not find the Government's submission that the applicant had been entitled to two free envelopes a month substantiated. It also found that the applicant's right to respect for his correspondence was not adequately protected by the provision of envelopes. It noted that the Government had not disputed that the applicant's requests had been turned down because there were no stamped envelopes for overseas correspondents available. In the circumstances, the Court found that the authorities had not discharged their positive obligation to supply the applicant with writing materials for his correspondence with the Court and, accordingly, held that there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

## **Law – Article 34**

The Court found that the applicant's fears about being transferred to another prison or encountering other problems as a result of lodging his application could amount to intimidation. When combined with the failure to provide him with the necessary writing materials for his correspondence with the Court, the delays in forwarding his correspondence to the Court and the Commission and the systematic opening of that correspondence constituted a form of unlawful and unacceptable pressure that violated the applicant's right of individual application. Consequently, the Court held that there had been a violation of Article 34 of the Convention.

## **Law – Article 8 in conjunction with Article 34**

In view of its findings on the other complaints, the Court held that no separate examination of this complaint was necessary.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8 and 34

## **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant 2,500 euros (EUR) for pecuniary and non-pecuniary damage and EUR 3,300 for costs and expenses, less the EUR 920 he had already received in legal aid.

**22. Eur. Court of HR, Odièvre v. France, judgment of 13 February 2003, application no. 42326/98. Applicant complained about her inability to find out about origins of her mother. The Court ruled that the request for disclosure of her mother's identity, was subject to the latter's consent being obtained**

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**no. 42326/98**

**13.02.2003**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### ***ODIÈVRE v. FRANCE***

Refusal to divulge identity of biological parents

## **Basic Facts**

The applicant was born in 1965. She was abandoned by her natural mother at birth and left with the Health and Social Security Department. Her mother requested -that her identity be kept secret from the applicant, who was placed in State care and later adopted under a full adoption order. The applicant subsequently tried to find out the identity of her natural parents and brothers, but was only able to obtain non-identifying information about her natural family.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court examined the case from the perspective of private life, not family life, since the applicant's claim to be entitled, in the name of biological truth, to know her personal history was based on her inability to gain access to information about her origins and to related identifying data.

The Court reiterated that Article 8 protected, among other interests, the right to personal development. Matters of relevance to personal development included details of a person's identity as a human being and the vital interest protected by the Convention in obtaining information necessary to discover the truth concerning important aspects of one's personal identity, such as the identity of one's parents. Birth, and in particular the circumstances in which a child was born, formed part of a child's, and subsequently the adult's, private life guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention. That provision was therefore applicable in the instant case.

It was noted that the French legislation aimed to protect the mother's and child's health at birth and to avoid abortions, in particular illegal abortions, and children being abandoned other than under the proper procedure. The right to respect for life was thus one of the aims pursued by the French system.

The Court observed that the applicant had been given access to non-identifying information about her mother and natural family that had enabled her to trace some of her roots, while ensuring the protection of third-party interests. In addition, while preserving the principle that mothers were entitled to give birth anonymously, the law of 22 of January 2002 facilitated searches for information about a person's biological origins by setting up a National Council on Access to Information about Personal Origins. The legislation was already in force and the applicant could use it to request disclosure of her mother's identity, subject to the latter's consent being obtained.

The French legislation thus sought to strike a balance and to ensure sufficient proportion between the competing interests.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8

**23. Eur. Court of HR, *Perry v. the United Kingdom*, judgment of 17 July 2003, application no. 63737/00 (violation of Article 8 of the Convention). Use of videotape by the Police for identification and prosecution purposes.**

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**no. 63737/00**  
**17.07.2003**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**PERRY v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Use of videotape by the Police for identification and prosecution purpose

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Stephen Arthur Perry, is a UK national, born in 1964 and currently detained in HM Prison Brixton. He was arrested on 17 April 1997 in connection with a series of armed robberies of mini-cab drivers in and around Wolverhampton and released pending an identification parade. When he failed to attend that and several further identification parades, the police requested permission to video him covertly.

On 19 November 1997 he was taken to the police station to attend an identity parade, which he refused to do. Meanwhile, on his arrival, he was filmed by the custody suite camera. An engineer had adjusted it to ensure that it took clear pictures during his visit. The pictures were inserted in a montage of film of other persons and shown to witnesses. Two witnesses of the armed robberies subsequently identified

him from the compilation tape. Neither Mr Perry nor his solicitor was informed that a tape had been made or used for identification purposes. He was convicted of robbery on 17 March 1999 and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. His subsequent appeals were unsuccessful.

Mr Perry complained, under Article 8 (right to respect for private life) of the Convention, that the police had covertly videotaped him for identification purposes and used the videotape in the prosecution against him.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that there was no indication that Mr Perry had had any expectation that footage would be taken of him in the police station for use in a video identification procedure and, potentially, as evidence prejudicial to his defence at trial. That ploy adopted by the police had gone beyond the normal use of this type of camera and amounted to an interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life.

The interference had not been in accordance with the law because the police had failed to comply with the procedures set out in the applicable code: they had not obtained the applicant's consent or informed him that the tape was being made; neither had they informed him of his rights in that respect.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)** : The Court awarded the applicant EUR 1,500 for non-pecuniary damage and EUR 9,500 for costs and expenses.

**24. Eur. Court of HR, *Matwiejczuk v. Poland*, judgment of 2 December 2003, application no. 37641/97 (No violation of Article 34).** The applicant complained about the length of his pre-trial detention, the length of the criminal proceedings against him and that his letters were monitored during his detention.

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**no. 37641/97**  
**02.12.2003**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **MATWIEJCZUK v. POLAND**

The monitoring of the applicant's correspondence violated his Convention rights

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Tomasz Matwiejczuk, is a Polish national born in 1966. He is currently detained in Radom Prison (Poland).

He complained about the length of his pre-trial detention (lasting two years, seven months and 22 days), the length of the criminal proceedings against him (almost three years and two months) and that his letters, including correspondence with the European Court of Human Rights, were monitored during his detention. He relied on: Article 5 § 3 (right to be brought promptly before a judge), Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial within a reasonable time), Article 8 (right to respect for correspondence) and Article 34 (effective exercise of the right to file individual applications).

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that the monitoring of the applicant's correspondence before 1 September 1998 was in breach of Article 8, as Polish law in force at that time did not clearly indicate the scope and manner of the discretion conferred on public authorities to control correspondence. In addition, the opening of a letter from the European Court of Human Rights to the applicant on 23 February 1999 – which had not taken place in the applicant's presence – was also in breach of Article 8, not being in accordance with the law. The Court therefore held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 8.

Given this finding, the Court did not consider it necessary to examine the applicant's claim that there was an interference with the exercise of his right of individual petition. The Court further found that the delivery of the applicants' correspondence had not been delayed and that there had been no violation of Articles 8 or 34 in that respect.

Finding that both the length of the applicant's pre-trial detention and the length of the proceedings against him were not reasonable, the Court held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 5 § 3 and Article 6 § 1.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8, 5 § 3 and 6 § 1.

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The applicant was awarded EUR 2,000 for non-pecuniary damage and EUR 1,500 less EUR 790 for costs and expenses.

**25. Eur. Court of HR, Von Hannover v. Germany, judgment of 24 June 2004, application no. 59320/00. Applicant complained about obligation of states to protect an individual's image, even for photos taken of public figures in public spaces.**

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**no. 59320/00**  
**24.06.2004**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**VON HANNOVER v. GERMANY**

Obligation of states to protect an individual's image, even for photos taken of public figures in public spaces

**Basic Facts**

The applicant was the eldest daughter of Prince Rainier III of Monaco. A number of German tabloid magazines published photos taken without her knowledge showing her outside her home going about her daily business, either alone or in company. The applicant sought an injunction in the German courts against any further publication of the photos in Germany. This was refused as the lower courts held that due to the applicant's status she had to tolerate the publication without her consent of photos taken outside her home. The Federal Court of Justice held that figures of contemporary society were entitled to respect for their private life even outside their home, but only if they had retired to a secluded place where it was objectively clear to everyone that they wanted to be alone, and where they behaved in a given situation in a manner in which they would not behave in a public place.

**Law – Article 8**

The publication of photos showing the applicant engaged in purely private activities in her daily life fell within the scope of her private life. The photos and accompanying commentaries had been published for the purposes of an article designed to satisfy the curiosity of a particular readership regarding the details of the private life of the princess, who was not a public figure and did not fulfil any official function on behalf of Monaco. In short, the publications in question had not contributed to any debate of general interest to society despite the applicant being known to the public. The Court also stressed that everyone, even if they were known to the general public, had to have a legitimate expectation of protection and respect for their private life, which included a social dimension. The photos in question, which concerned exclusively details of the applicant's private life, had been taken without her knowledge or consent and in the context of daily harassment by photographers. Moreover, increased vigilance in protecting private life was necessary to contend with new communication technologies which, among other things, made possible the systematic taking of photos and their dissemination to a broad section of the public. In defining the applicant as a figure of contemporary society, the domestic courts did not allow her to rely on her right to protection of her private life unless she was in a secluded place out of the public eye. In the Court's view, the criterion of spatial isolation was in reality too vague and difficult for the person concerned to determine in advance. The State, which had a positive obligation under the Convention to protect private life and the right to control the use of one's image, had failed to ensure the effective protection of the applicant's private life.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Separate Opinions**

Judges Cabral Barreto and Zupančič expressed concurring opinions, which are annexed to the judgment.

**26. Eur. Court of HR, Sciacca v. Italy, judgment of 11 January 2005, application no. 50774/99. The applicant submits that the dissemination of the photograph at a press conference organised by the public prosecutor's office and the tax inspectors infringed her right to respect for her private life.**

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**no. 50774/99**  
**11.01.2005**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **SCIACCA v. ITALY**

The dissemination of the photograph at a press conference organised by the public prosecutor's office and the tax inspectors infringed the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Carmela Sciacca, is an Italian national who was born in 1948 and lives in Syracuse (Italy). She was a teacher at a private school in Lentini which owned a company of which she and other teachers were members.

During an investigation into irregularities of management of the school's activities, Mrs Sciacca was prosecuted for criminal conspiracy, tax evasion and forgery. She was arrested and was made subject

to a compulsory residence order in November 1998. The tax inspectors drew up a file on her containing photographs and her fingerprints.

Following a press conference on 4 December 1998 given by the public prosecutor's office and the tax inspectors, the dailies *le Giornale di Sicilia* and *la Sicilia* published articles on the facts giving rise to the prosecution which were illustrated by a photograph of the four arrested women, including the applicant. The photograph of Mrs Sciacca, which was published four times, was the one that had been taken by the tax inspectors when the file was drawn up on her and released by them to the press.

At the end of the proceedings the applicant was sentenced to one year and ten months' imprisonment and fined EUR 300. The applicant submitted that the dissemination of her photograph at the press conference had infringed her right to respect for her private life, contrary to Article 8 (right to respect for private life) of the Convention.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that the photograph, taken for the purposes of drawing up an official file, had been released to the press by the tax inspectors. According to the information in its possession, there was no law governing the taking of photographs of people under suspicion or arrested and assigned to residence and the release of photos to the press. It was rather an area in which a practice had developed.

The interference with the applicant's right to respect for her private life had thus not been "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of Article 8

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court considered that the finding of a violation constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction for the non-pecuniary damage alleged by the applicant and awarded her EUR 3,500 for costs and expenses

**27. Eur. Court of HR, Pisk-Piskowski v. Poland, judgment of 14 January 2005, application no. 92/03. The applicant complained that the proceedings resulting in his conviction had been unfair and that his right to respect for his correspondence had been infringed.**

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**no. 92/03  
14.06.2005**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **PISK- PISKOWSKI v. POLAND**

Infringement of applicant's right to respect for his correspondence

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Andrzej Pisk-Piskowski, is a Polish national who was born in 1967 and lives in Opole (Poland). On 11 December 2001 the Opole District Court found the applicant guilty of making threats and sentenced him to one year and six months' imprisonment. Neither the applicant nor his officially assigned counsel was present at the delivery of the judgment but both the applicant and his lawyer were present at an earlier hearing held by the trial court. The applicant further failed to lodge an appeal against the judgment given on 11 December 2001 in accordance with the procedural requirements. The first letter sent by the applicant from the Wrocław Detention Centre to the European Court of Human Rights arrived at the Registry on 6 December 2002, stamped "District Court in Legnica, censored on 22.11.02" (*Sąd Rejonowy w Legnicy, cenzurowano dnia 22.11.02*) and "252, 14 NOV 2002, register number 2738/01" (*252, 14 LIS 2002, numer ewid. 2738/01*). The applicant complained, in particular, that the proceedings resulting in his conviction had been unfair and that his right to respect for his correspondence had been infringed. He relied in particular on Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing).

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court raised *ex officio* the issues under Articles 8 (right to respect for correspondence) and 34 (right of individual petition) concerning the censorship of his correspondence. It considered that there was a reasonable likelihood that the first letter sent by the applicant had been opened by the domestic authorities, even if there was no stamp to that effect on the envelope. In reaching that conclusion, the Court took into account the fact that the Polish word *ocezurowano*, which had appeared on the envelope, meant that a competent authority had allowed the dispatch or delivery of the letter after monitoring its content. As long as the authorities continued the practice of marking prisoners' letters with the *ocezurowano* stamp, the Court had no alternative but to presume that those letters had been opened and their contents read.

The Court noted that Article 103 § 1 of the 1997 Code on the Execution of Criminal Sentences expressly prohibited censorship of, or other forms of interference with, correspondence between convicted detainees and "institutions set up by international treaties ratified by the Republic of Poland concerning the protection of human rights". Since the authorities had disregarded that statutory prohibition, the Court held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 8. It further considered that it was not necessary to carry out a separate examination of the applicant's complaint under Article 34.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court considered that the finding of a violation constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction for the non-pecuniary damage he had sustained.

**28. Eur. Court of HR, Matheron v. France, judgment of 29 March 2005, application no. 57752/00. The applicant complains under Article 8 of the Convention (right to respect for his private life) that evidence was used against him that had been obtained by telephone tapping in separate proceedings. Not being a party to those proceedings, he had been unable to contest their validity.**

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**no. 57752/00**  
**29.03.2005**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **MATHERON v. FRANCE**

The use of evidence obtained through telephone tapping in separate proceedings where the applicant was not a party and thus unable to contest its validity violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Robert Matheron, is a French national who was born in 1949. He is currently in Salon de Provence Prison (France).

In 1993 criminal proceedings were instituted against him for international drug-trafficking. Evidence obtained from telephone tapping that had been used in proceedings against a co-defendant was also used against the applicant. The applicant argued that that evidence was inadmissible, but the indictment division ruled that it had no jurisdiction to verify whether evidence obtained from telephone tapping in separate proceedings had been properly communicated and recorded in writing.

On 6 October 1999 the Court of Cassation dismissed an appeal by the applicant, holding that the indictment division only had jurisdiction to determine the validity of the application to adduce the telephone records in evidence, but not to decide whether the telephone tapping was lawful.

On 23 June 2000 the applicant was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment.

He complained under Article 8 of the Convention (right to respect for his private life) that evidence had been used against him that had been obtained from telephone tapping in separate proceedings. Not being a party to those proceedings, he had been unable to contest their validity.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The main task of the Court was to ascertain whether an “effective control” had been available to the applicant to challenge the telephone tapping to which he had been made subject. It was clear that he had been unable to intervene in the proceedings in which the order to monitor telephone calls had been made. Furthermore, the Court of Cassation had ruled that in such cases the role of the indictment division was confined to checking whether the application to adduce evidence obtained from the telephone tapping had been made in the proper form.

The Court reiterated that the 1991 Act regulating telephone tapping in France was consistent with the Convention. However, it said that the reasoning followed by the Court of Cassation could lead to

decisions that would deprive a number of people, namely those against whom evidence obtained from telephone tapping in separate proceedings was used, of the protection afforded by the Act. That was what had happened in the case before the Court in which the applicant had not enjoyed the effective protection of the Act, which made no distinction on the basis of the proceedings in which the taped telephone conversations were used.

In those circumstances, the Court found that the applicant had not had access to “effective control” allowing him to contest the validity of the evidence obtained through telephone tapping.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant EUR 3,500 for non-pecuniary damage and EUR 5,500 for costs and expenses.

**29. Eur. Court of HR, Vetter v. France, judgment of 31 May 2005, application no. 59842/00.  
Complaint that there was no statutory basis in French law for the installation of listening devices in the flat or the recording of the applicant’s conversations**

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**no. 59842/00**  
**31.05.2005**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **VETTER v. FRANCE**

The installation of listening devices in the flat and the recording of the applicant’s conversations violated Convention rights

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Christophe Vetter, is a French national who was born in 1975. He is currently serving a prison sentence.

Following the discovery of a body with gunshot wounds, the police installed listening devices in a flat which the applicant, whom they suspected of the homicide, visited regularly. On the strength of the conversations that were recorded, the applicant was placed under formal investigation for intentional homicide and remanded in custody until 30 December 1997.

The applicant argued that there was no statutory basis for the use of listening devices and that the evidence that had thereby been obtained was inadmissible. The Indictment Division of the Montpellier Court of Appeal and subsequently the Criminal Division of the Court of Cassation rejected that argument, holding that the monitoring of his conversations had not contravened Articles 81 and 100 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure on the confidentiality of telephone communications.

Partly on the basis of the evidence obtained from the recordings, the applicant was committed for trial in the Hérault Assize Court. On 23 October 2000 he was convicted and sentenced to twenty years’ imprisonment.

The applicant complained under Article 8 of the Convention (right to respect for private life) that there was no statutory basis in French law for the installation of the listening devices in the flat or the recording

of his conversations and that his right to respect for his private life had accordingly been violated. He also complained under Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing) that the procedure followed in the Court of Cassation was unfair in that neither the report of the reporting judgment nor the submissions of the advocate general had been communicated to him and that his complaint under Article 8 of the Convention had been dismissed on the ground that he had no standing.

### **Law – Articles 8 and 6**

The Court noted that the matters complained of by the applicant amounted to interference with his right to respect for his private life. However, it was not satisfied that Articles 100 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure had afforded any statutory basis for the order to install the listening devices at the time it was made and implemented, as those provisions only regulated the interception of telephone communications and did not refer to listening devices. Even assuming that the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure had constituted a basis for the measure, the Court considered that the “law” so identified did not have the requisite quality required by the Court’s case-law.

In conclusion, the Court noted that French law did not set out the extent of the authorities’ discretion with regard to listening devices or the procedure by which it was to be exercised with sufficiently clarity. In those circumstances, it held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

The Court held that no separate question arose under Article 6 of the Convention in respect of the decision by the Criminal Division of the Court of Cassation to dismiss the applicant’s appeal under Article 8 on the grounds that he had no standing.

Lastly, referring to its settled case-law, the Court held unanimously that there had been a violation of **Article 6 § 1** in the proceedings in the Court of Cassation as the reporting judge’s report had not been communicated to the applicant or his counsel before the hearing, whereas the advocate general had received a copy.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8 and 6 § 1

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant EUR 1,500 for non-pecuniary damage.

**30. Eur. Court of HR, Wisse v. France, judgment of 20 December 2005, application no. 71611/01.  
The applicants contend that the recording of their conversations in the prison visiting rooms constituted interference with their right to respect for their private and family life.**

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**no. 71611/01  
20.12.2005**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **WISSE v. FRANCE**

The recording of the applicants' conversations in the prison visiting rooms violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicants, Jean-François Wisse and his brother Christian Wisse, are French nationals who were born in 1959 and 1952 respectively. They are currently detained in France in Ploemeur Detention Centre and Brest Prison, where they are serving sentences of 25 years and 20 years respectively following their conviction in 1992 for armed robbery and attempted murder.

The applicants were arrested on 9 October 1998 on suspicion of committing armed robberies at the branches of the Crédit Agricole bank in Tinténiac and Combourg, and were placed in pre-trial detention. Under a warrant issued by the investigating judge, the telephone conversations between the applicants and their relatives in the prison visiting rooms were recorded between November 1998 and February 1999.

The applicants made an unsuccessful application to have the steps in the proceedings relating to the recording of their conversations declared invalid. The Court of Cassation dismissed an appeal lodged by them on that point on 12 December 2000.

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), the applicants argued that the recording of their conversations in the prison visiting rooms constituted interference with their right to respect for their private and family life.

#### **Law – Article 8**

In the Court's view, the systematic recording of conversations in a visiting room for purposes other than prison security deprived visiting rooms of their sole *raison d'être*, namely to allow detainees to maintain some degree of "private life", including the privacy of conversations with their families. The conversations conducted in a prison visiting room, therefore, could be regarded as falling within the scope of the concepts of "private life" and "correspondence".

The recording and subsequent use of the conversations between the applicants and their relatives in the visiting rooms amounted to an interference with their private lives which was not in accordance with the law within the meaning of Article 8 § 2. French law did not indicate with sufficient clarity how and to what extent the authorities could interfere with detainees' private lives, or the scope and manner of exercise of their powers of discretion in that sphere.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

## Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)

The Court considered that the finding of a violation of the Convention constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction for the alleged non-pecuniary damage.

**31. Eur. Court of HR, Turek v. Slovakia, judgment of 14 February 2006, application no. 57986/00. The applicant complains about being registered as a collaborator with the former Czechoslovak Communist Security Agency, the issuing of a security clearance to that effect and the dismissal of his action challenging that registration.**

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**no. 57986/00**

**14.02.2006**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **TUREK v. SLOVAKIA**

The continued existence of a former Czechoslovak Communist Security Agency file registering the applicant as one of its agents and the resultant effects violated Convention rights

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Ivan Turek, is a Slovakian national who was born in 1944 and lives in Prešov (Slovakia). He held a senior public sector post dealing with the administration of education in schools.

In March 1992, in response to a request made by his employer under the Lustration Act, an Act of 1991 which defined supplementary requirements for holding certain posts in the public sector, the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic issued a negative security certificate in respect of the applicant. As a consequence, he felt compelled to leave his job.

The document stated that he had been registered by the former State Security Agency (*Štátna bezpečnosť*, "StB") as its collaborator within the meaning of the Act and that he was therefore disqualified from holding certain posts in the public sector. The applicant claimed he had unwillingly met up with StB agents before and after trips he had made abroad in the mid-80s but had never passed on to them any confidential information and had not operated as an informer for the agency.

The applicant initially lodged an action against the Federal Ministry on 25 May 1992, but subsequently directed his action against the Slovak Intelligence Service (*Slovenská informačná služba* – "the SIS"), which had in effect taken over the StB archives. He sought a judicial ruling declaring that his registration as a collaborator with the StB had been wrongful.

In August 1995, at the request of Kolšice Regional Court, the SIS handed over all ex-StB documents concerning the applicant in its possession with the indication that the documents were top secret and that the rules on confidentiality were to be observed. The court then held a number of hearings where it heard the testimonies of several former StB agents. At a hearing held on 24 September 1998 the SIS submitted the Internal Guidelines of the Federal Ministry of 1972 concerning secret collaboration. That document was classified and the applicant was therefore denied access to it. The applicant's action was dismissed on 19 May 1999.

In October 1999 the Supreme Court upheld the regional court's judgment. It found, in particular, that only unjustified registration in the StB files would amount to a violation of an individual's good name and reputation. It had therefore been crucial for the applicant to prove that his registration had been contrary to the rules applicable at the material time, which he had failed to do.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court recognised that, particularly in proceedings related to the operations of state security agencies, there might be legitimate grounds to limit access to certain documents and other materials. However, in respect of lustration proceedings, that consideration lost much of its validity, particularly since such proceedings were by their nature orientated towards the establishment of facts dating from the communist era and were not directly linked to the current functions of the security services. Furthermore, it was the legality of the agency's actions which was in question.

It noted that the domestic courts considered it of crucial importance for the applicant to prove that the State's interference with his rights was contrary to the applicable rules. Those rules were, however, secret and the applicant did not have full access to them. On the other hand, the State – the SIS – did have full access. The Court found that that requirement placed an unrealistic and excessive burden on the applicant and did not respect the principle of equality. There had therefore been a violation of Article 8 concerning the lack of a procedure by which the applicant could seek protection for his right to respect for his private life.

The Court found it unnecessary to examine separately the effects on the applicant's private life of his registration in the StB files and of his negative security clearance.

### **Law – Article 6 § 1**

With particular regard to what was at stake for the applicant, the Court found that the length of the proceedings, lasting seven years and some five months for two levels of jurisdiction, was excessive and failed to meet the reasonable time requirement in breach of Article 6.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8 and 6 § 1

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant 8,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 900 for costs and expenses

### **Separate Opinion**

Judge Maruste expressed a dissenting opinion, which is annexed to the judgment.

**32. Eur. Court of HR, Segerstedt-Wiberg and Others v. Sweden, judgment of 6 June 2006, application no 62332/00. The applicants complain about the storage of certain information about them in Swedish Security Police files and the refusal to reveal the extent of the information stored.**

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**no 62332/00**  
**06.06.2006**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **SEGERSTEDT-WIBERG AND OTHERS v. SWEDEN**

Storage of information about the applicants by the police as well as the refusal to reveal the extent of the stored information violated Convention rights

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicants, all Swedish nationals, are: Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg (born in 1911), Mr Nygren (1948), Mr Ehneborn (1952), Mr Frejd (1948) and Mr Schmid (1939). The applicants all made unsuccessful requests to view in their entirety the records held about them by the Swedish Security Police. Their requests were refused on the ground that making them available might jeopardise crime prevention or national security. The authorities and domestic courts relied on Chapter 5, section 1(2), of the 1980 Secrecy Act; that it was "not clear that the information may be imparted without jeopardising the purpose of the decision or measures planned or without harm to future activities".

Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg is the daughter of a well-known publisher and anti-Nazi activist, Torgny Segerstedt. From 1958 to 1970 she was a Liberal Member of Parliament. She is a prominent public figure in Sweden.

On 22 April 1998 she asked to view her Security Police records, claiming that damaging information was being circulated about her, including rumours that she was "unreliable" in respect of the Soviet Union. Her request was refused. In the light of an amendment to the Secrecy Act, she asked whether or not her name was on the Security Police register and was subsequently granted authorisation to view certain records which concerned letter bombs which had been sent to her in 1990. On 8 October 1999 she brought proceedings to be allowed to consult her file in its entirety. Her request was refused under Chapter 5, section 1(2).

On 13 December 2002 the Swedish Security Service decided to release all information (51 pages) stored on Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg up until 1976. The Swedish Government has also informed the European Court of Human Rights that, in 2001, Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg was registered by the Security Service because of a new incident that could have been interpreted as a threat against her.

Mr Nygren is an established journalist at Göteborgs-Posten, one of the largest daily newspapers in Sweden. He had written a number of articles in the paper on Nazism and on the Security Police which have attracted wide public attention.

On 27 April 1998 the Security Police rejected a request from Mr Nydren for access to their quarterly reports on Communist and Nazi activities for the years 1969 to 1998. On 7 June 1999 he further requested permission to read his Security Police file and any other documents containing his name. He was given access to two pages of information, concerning his participation in a political meeting in Warsaw in 1967, but his requests were otherwise refused under Chapter 5, section 1(2).

Mr Ehnebom, has been a member of the KPML(r) - Marxist-Leninist (revolutionaries) Party - established in 1970) since 1978. He is an engineer and since 1976 has been employed by the Ericsson Group.

On 10 April 1999 he submitted a request to the Security Police to see all files that might exist on him. He was granted access to 30 pages of information, including copies of two security check forms concerning him from 1980 used by the FMV (the Försvarets Materialverk, an authority responsible for procuring equipment for the Swedish Army, and with whom the Ericsson Group worked). The forms noted that Mr Ehnebom was a member of the KPML(r) and in contact with leading party members of the party. Mr Ehnebom submitted that that information was behind the FMV's call for him to be removed from his post. His requests were otherwise refused under Chapter 5, section 1(2).

Mr Frejd has been a member of the KPML(r) since 1972 and since 1974 the Chairman of Proletären FF, a sports club with about 900 members. He is well known within sports circles in Sweden and has actively worked with children and young people in sport to foster international solidarity and facilitate social integration through sport.

On 23 January 1999 he requested access to information about him contained in the Security Police register. He was granted permission to see parts of his file which included a note that he was a active KPML(r) member and had stood for the party in a local election. On 1 March 2000 he asked to see his file in its entirety and all other records that might have been entered concerning him. His request was refused under Chapter 5, section 1(2).

Mr Schmid was from 1999 to 2004 a member of the European Parliament, belonging to the GUE/NGL Group and sitting for the Swedish Left Party.

On 9 December 1997 he filed a request to have access to all information held about him by the Security Police. He was given access to selected files, but his request was otherwise rejected under Chapter 5, section 1(2). The entries viewed by Mr Schmid concerned mostly political matters such as participation in a campaign for nuclear disarmament and general peace movement activities, including public demonstrations and activities related to membership of the Social-Democratic Student Association. One entry, dated 12 May 1969, stated that he had extreme left-wing leanings and had suggested using guerrilla tactics and, if necessary, violence during a demonstration.

## **Law – Article 8**

### Storage of the information released to applicants

The Court was satisfied that the storage of the information at issue had a legal basis in the 1998 Police Data Act. It noted in particular that Section 33 of the Act allowed the Security Police register to include personal information concerning a person suspected of a crime threatening national security or a terrorist offence, or undergoing a security check or where “there are other special reasons”. While the Security Police had some discretion in deciding what constituted “special reasons”, that discretion was not unfettered. For example, under the Swedish Constitution, no entry regarding a citizen could be made in a public register exclusively on the basis of that person’s political opinion, without his or her consent. And, among other things, a general prohibition of registration on the basis of political opinion was set out in section 5 of the Police Data Act. Against that background, the Court found that the scope of the discretion conferred on the competent authorities and the manner of its exercise was indicated with sufficient clarity, having regard to the legitimate aim of the measure in question, to give the individual adequate protection against arbitrary interference. Accordingly, the interference with the respective applicants’ private life was “in accordance with the law”, within the meaning of Article 8.

The Court also accepted that the storage of the information in question pursued legitimate aims, namely the prevention of disorder or crime, in the case of Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg, and the protection of national security, for the other applicants.

While the Court recognised that intelligence services might legitimately exist in a democratic society, it reiterated that powers of secret surveillance of citizens were tolerable under the Convention only in so far as strictly necessary for safeguarding democratic institutions. Such interference had to be supported by relevant and sufficient reasons and be proportionate to the legitimate aim or aims pursued. In the applicants' case, Sweden's interest in protecting national security and combating terrorism had to be balanced against the seriousness of the interference with the respective applicants' right to respect for private life.

Concerning Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg, the Court found no reason to doubt that the reasons for keeping on record the information relating to bomb threats in 1990 against her were relevant and sufficient as regards the aim of preventing disorder or crime. The measure was at least in part intended to protect her; there was therefore no question of any disproportionate interference with her right to respect for her private life.

However, as to the information released to Mr Nygren (his participation in a political meeting in Warsaw in 1967), the Court, bearing in mind the nature and age of the information, did not find its continued storage to be supported by reasons which were relevant and sufficient as regards the protection of national security.

Similarly, the storage of the information released to Mr Schmid (that he, in 1969, had allegedly advocated violent resistance to police control during demonstrations) could in most part hardly be deemed to correspond to any actual relevant national security interests for Sweden. Its continued storage, though relevant, could not be deemed sufficient 30 years later. Therefore, the Court found that the continued storage of the information released to Mr Nygren and Mr Schmid entailed a disproportionate interference with their right to respect for private life

The information released to Mr Ehnebom and Mr Frejd raised more complex issues in that it related to their membership of the *KPML(r)*, a political party which, the Swedish Government stressed, advocated the use of violence and breaches of the law in order to bring about change in the existing social order. The Court observed that the relevant clauses of the *KPML(r)* party programme rather boldly advocated establishing the domination of one social class over another by disregarding existing laws and regulations. However, the programme contained no statements amounting to an immediate and unequivocal call for the use of violence as a means of achieving political ends. Clause 23, for instance, which contained the most explicit statements on the matter, did not propose violence as either a primary or an inevitable means in all circumstances. Nonetheless, it affirmed the principle of armed opposition. The Court reiterated its position that the constitution and programme of a political party could not be taken into account as the sole criterion for determining its objectives and intentions; the contents of the programme had to be compared with the actions of the party's leaders and the positions they defended.

The *KPML(r)* party programme was the only evidence relied upon by the Government, however. Beyond that they did not point to any specific circumstance indicating that the impugned programme clauses were reflected in actions or statements by the party's leaders or members or that they constituted an actual or even potential threat to national security when the information was released in 1999, almost 30 years after the party had come into existence. The reasons for the continued storage of the information about Mr Ehnebom and Mr Frejd, although relevant, could not be considered sufficient and therefore amounted to a disproportionate interference with their right to respect for private life. The Court concluded that the continued storage of the information that had been released was necessary concerning Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg, but not for any of the remaining applicants. Accordingly, the Court

found that there has been no violation of Article 8 concerning Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg, but that there had been a violation concerning the other four applicants.

#### Refusal to grant applicants full access to information stored about them by Security Police

The Court reiterated that a refusal of full access to a national secret police register was necessary where the State might legitimately fear that the provision of such information might jeopardise the efficacy of a secret surveillance system designed to protect national security and to combat terrorism. In the applicants' case the national administrative and judicial authorities involved had all found that full access would jeopardise the purpose of the system. The Court did not find any ground on which it could arrive at a different conclusion.

The Court concluded that Sweden was entitled to consider that the interests of national security and the fight against terrorism prevailed over the interests of the applicants in being advised of the full extent to which information was kept about them on the Security Police register. Accordingly, the Court found that there had been no violation of Article 8.

#### **Law – Articles 10 and 11**

The Court considered that the storage of personal data related to political opinion, affiliations and activities that had been deemed unjustified for the purposes of Article 8 § 2 *ipso facto* constituted an unjustified interference with the rights protected by Articles 10 and 11. Having regard to its findings under Article 8, the Court therefore found that there had been violations of Articles 10 and 11 concerning all the applicants except Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg.

#### **Law – Article 13**

Considering the applicants' access to an effective remedy under Article 13, the Court observed that the Parliamentary Ombudsman and Chancellor of Justice could receive individual complaints and had a duty to investigate them in order to ensure that the relevant laws had been properly applied. By tradition, their opinions commanded great respect in Swedish society and were usually followed. However, as the Court had found previously, they lacked the power to render a legally-binding decision. In addition, they exercised general supervision and did not have specific responsibility for inquiries into secret surveillance or into the entry and storage of information on the Secret Police register. The Court had already found neither remedy, when considered on its own, to be effective within the meaning of Article 13.

In the meantime, a number of steps had been taken to improve the remedies, notably authorising the Chancellor of Justice to pay compensation, with the possibility of judicial appeal against the dismissal of a compensation claim, and the establishment of the Records Board (empowered to monitor on a day-to-day basis the Secret Police's entry and storage of information and compliance with the Police Data Act). The Data Inspection Board had also been set up. Moreover, a decision by the Security Police whether to advise a person of information kept about him or her on its register could form the subject of an appeal to the County Administrative Court and the Supreme Administrative Court.

The Court noted that the Records Board had no competence to order the destruction of files or the erasure or rectification of information kept in the files. It appeared the Data Inspection Board had wider powers. It could examine complaints made by individuals. Where it found that data was being processed unlawfully, it could order the processor, on pain of a fine, to stop processing the information other than for storage. The Board was not itself empowered to order the erasure of unlawfully stored information, but could make an application for such a measure to the County Administrative Court. However, the Court had received no information indicating the effectiveness of the Data Inspection Board in practice.

It had therefore not been shown that that remedy was effective. In addition the applicants had no direct access to any legal remedy as regards the erasure of the information in question. In the view of the Court, those shortcomings were not consistent with the requirements of effectiveness in Article 13 and were not offset by any possibilities for the applicants to seek compensation. The Court found that the applicable remedies, whether considered on their own or together, could not satisfy the requirements of Article 13 and that there had therefore been a violation of Article 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8, 10, 11 and 13

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded 3,000 euros (EUR) to Ms Segerstedt-Wiberg, EUR 7,000 each to Mr Nygren and Mr Schmid and EUR 5,000 each to Mr Ehnebom and Mr Frejd in respect of non-pecuniary damage. It awarded EUR 20,000 to the applicants, jointly, for costs and expenses.

**33. Eur. Court of HR, L.L. v. France, judgment of 10 October 2006, application no. 7508/02. The applicant complains about the production and use in court proceedings of documents from his medical records, without his consent and without a medical expert having been appointed in that connection.**

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**no. 7508/02**  
**10.10.2006**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **L.L. v. FRANCE**

The production and use in court proceedings of medical data without the applicant's consent violated the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant is a French national who was born in 1957 and lives in France.

In 1996 the applicant's wife filed a petition for divorce on the grounds of his repeated acts of domestic violence and chronic alcoholism. In 1998 the *Tribunal de Grande Instance*, having noted in particular that she had produced medical certificates in support of those allegations, granted the divorce on grounds of fault by the applicant and confirmed the interim measures whereby the mother had been given custody of the couple's two children, who were born in 1985 and 1988.

The applicant appealed against that decision, claiming that his ex-wife had acted fraudulently in obtaining a report of an operation that he had undergone to remove his spleen, and arguing that she was therefore not entitled to use it in court proceedings. He further maintained that he had never given her a copy of that report, nor had he released the doctor who signed it from his duty of medical secrecy in that connection. In February 2000 the Court of Appeal upheld the judgment under appeal. It found in particular that the medical certificates produced by the applicant's ex-wife confirmed that he was an alcoholic and that he was violent as a result. With a view to appealing on points of law, the applicant lodged an application for legal aid with the Court of Cassation's legal aid office, but his request was denied.

In the meantime, following a report of ill-treatment filed by the applicant, the children's judge ordered a measure of educational assistance in an open environment for the couple's children.

The applicant complained about the production and use in court proceedings of documents from his medical records, without his consent and without a medical expert having been appointed in that connection.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that, by basing its decision on the details of the operation report and quoting the passages that it found relevant, the Court of Appeal had disclosed and rendered public personal data concerning the applicant.

The Court further observed that in their decisions the French courts had first referred to the witness statements testifying to the applicant's drink problem and to the "duly detailed" medical certificates recording the "reality of the violence inflicted on the wife", concluding that the conduct taken into account had constituted a serious and repeated breach of marital duties and obligations and had led to an irretrievable breakdown in the marriage. It was only on a subsidiary basis that the courts had referred to the impugned medical report in support of their decisions, and it therefore appeared that they could have reached the same conclusion without it.

The Court therefore considered that the impugned interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life, in view of the fundamental importance of the protection of personal data, was not proportionate to the aim pursued and was not "necessary in a democratic society", "for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others".

The Court further noted that domestic law did not provide sufficient safeguards as regards the use in this type of proceedings of data concerning the parties' private lives, thus justifying a fortiori the need for a strict review as to the necessity of such measures.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court considered that the finding of a violation constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction for the non-pecuniary damage alleged by the applicant, and dismissed the claim for costs and expenses incurred in the domestic proceedings.

**34. Eur. Court of HR, Copland v. United Kingdom, judgment of 3 April 2007, application no. 62617/00, Complaint that, during the applicant's employment at the College, her telephone, e-mail and internet usage had been monitored at the Deputy Principal's instigation**

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**no. 62617/00  
03.04.2007**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**COPLAND v. UNITED KINGDOM**

The monitoring of an employee's telephone, e-mail and internet usage violated the Convention

**Basic Facts**

In 1991 the applicant was employed by Carmarthenshire College ("the College"). The College is a statutory body administered by the State. In 1995 the applicant became the personal assistant to the College Principal ("the CP") and from the end of 1995 she was required to work closely with the newly appointed Deputy Principal ("the DP").

In about July 1998, whilst on annual leave, the applicant visited another campus of the College with a male director. She subsequently became aware that the DP had contacted that campus to enquire about her visit and understood that he was suggesting an improper relationship between her and the director.

During her employment, the applicant's telephone, e-mail and Internet usage were subjected to monitoring at the DP's instigation. According to the Government, this monitoring took place in order to ascertain whether the applicant was making excessive use of College facilities for personal purposes. The Government stated that the monitoring of telephone usage consisted of analysis of the College telephone bills showing telephone numbers called, the dates and times of the calls, and their length and cost. The applicant also believed that there had been detailed and comprehensive logging of the length of calls, the number of calls received and made, and the telephone numbers of individuals calling her. The Government submitted that the monitoring of telephone usage took place for a few months up to about 22 November 1999. The applicant contended that her telephone usage was monitored over a period of about eighteen months until November 1999.

The applicant's Internet usage was also monitored by the DP. The Government accepted that this monitoring took the form of analysing the websites visited, the times and dates of the visits to the websites and their duration, and that this monitoring took place from October to November 1999. The applicant did not comment on the manner in which her Internet usage was monitored but submitted that it took place over a much longer period of time than the Government had admitted.

In November 1999 the applicant became aware that enquiries were being made into her use of e-mail at work when her step-daughter was contacted by the College and asked to supply information about e-mails that she had sent to the College. The applicant wrote to the CP to ask whether there was a general investigation taking place or whether her e-mails only were being investigated. By an e-mail of 24 November 1999, the CP advised the applicant that, whilst all e-mail activity was logged, the information technology department of the College was investigating only her e-mails, following a request by the DP.

There was no policy in force at the College at the material time regarding the monitoring of telephone, e-mail or Internet usage by employees. In about March or April 2000 the applicant was informed by other members of staff at the College that between 1996 and late 1999 several of her activities had been monitored by the DP or those acting on his behalf. The applicant also believed that people to whom she

had made calls were in turn telephoned by the DP, or those acting on his behalf, to identify the callers and the purpose of the call. She further believed that the DP became aware of a legally privileged fax that was sent by herself to her solicitors and that her personal movements, both at work and when on annual or sick leave, were the subject of surveillance.

### **Law – Article 8**

According to the Court's case-law, telephone calls from business premises are prima facie covered by the notions of "private life" and "correspondence" for the purposes of Article 8 § 1. It follows logically that e-mails sent from work should be similarly protected under Article 8, as should information derived from the monitoring of personal Internet usage. Additionally, the applicant in the present case had been given no warning that her calls would be liable to monitoring; therefore, she had a reasonable expectation as to the privacy of calls made from her work telephone. The same expectation should apply in relation to the applicant's e-mail and Internet usage.

The Court observes that the use of information relating to the date and length of telephone conversations and in particular the numbers dialed can give rise to an issue under Article 8 as such information constitutes an "integral element of the communications made by telephone". The mere fact that these data may have been legitimately obtained by the College, in the form of telephone bills, is no bar to finding an interference with rights guaranteed under Article 8. Moreover, storing of personal data relating to the private life of an individual also falls within the application of Article 8 § 1. Thus, it is irrelevant that the data held by the College were not disclosed or used against the applicant in disciplinary or other proceedings.

Accordingly, the Court considers that the collection and storage of personal information relating to the applicant's telephone, as well as to her e-mail and Internet usage, without her knowledge, amounted to an interference with her right to respect for her private life and correspondence within the meaning of Article 8. It remains to be assessed whether such interference could be justified.

The Court is not convinced by the Government's submission that the College was authorised under its statutory powers to do "anything necessary or expedient" for the purposes of providing higher and further education, and finds the argument unpersuasive. Moreover, the Government do not seek to argue that any provisions existed at the relevant time, either in general domestic law or in the governing instruments of the College, regulating the circumstances in which employers could monitor the use of telephone, e-mail and the Internet by employees. Furthermore, it is clear that the Telecommunications (Lawful Business Practice) Regulations 2000 (adopted under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000) which make such provision were not in force at the relevant time.

Accordingly, as there was no domestic law regulating monitoring at the relevant time, the interference in this case was not "in accordance with the law" as required by Article 8 § 2 of the Convention. The Court would not exclude that the monitoring of an employee's telephone, e-mail or Internet usage at the place of work may be considered "necessary in a democratic society" in certain situations in pursuit of a legitimate aim. However, having regard to its above conclusion, it is not necessary to pronounce on that matter in the instant case.

In light of the finding of a violation of Article 8, it was held unnecessary to examine the case under Article 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

## **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded Ms Copland EUR 3,000 in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 6,000 for costs and expenses.

**35. *Eur. Court of HR, I. v. Finland*, judgment of 3 April 2007, application no. 20511/03, Complaint that the applicant's colleagues had unlawfully consulted her confidential patient records and that the district health authority had failed to provide adequate safeguards against unauthorised access of medical data.**

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**no. 20511/03**

**17.07.2008**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **I. v. FINLAND**

Lack of safeguards against unauthorised access to medical data violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, I., is a Finnish national who was born in 1960 and lives in Finland.

Between 1989 and 1994 the applicant worked on fixed-term contracts as a nurse in a public hospital. From 1987 onwards she consulted that hospital's polyclinic for infectious diseases as she had been diagnosed as HIV-positive.

The case concerned the applicant's allegation that, following certain remarks made at work at the beginning of 1992, she suspected that colleagues had unlawfully consulted her confidential patient records and that the district health authority had failed to provide adequate safeguards against unauthorised access of medical data. She relied on Article 8 (right to respect for private life), Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing) and Article 13 (right to an effective remedy).

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court held that the protection of personal data, in particular medical data, is of fundamental importance to a person's enjoyment of his or her right to respect for private and family life as guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention. Respecting the confidentiality of health data is a vital principle in the legal systems of all the Contracting Parties to the Convention. It is crucial not only to respect the sense of privacy of a patient but also to preserve his or her confidence in the medical profession and in the health services in general. The above considerations are especially valid as regards protection of the confidentiality of information about a person's HIV infection, given the sensitive issues surrounding this disease. The domestic law must afford appropriate safeguards to prevent any such communication or disclosure of personal health data as may be inconsistent with the guarantees in Article 8 of the Convention.

The Court notes that at the beginning of the 1990s there were general provisions in Finnish legislation aiming at protecting sensitive personal data. It notes that the data controller had to ensure that personal data were appropriately secured against, among other things, unlawful access. The data controller also had to make sure that only the personnel treating a patient had access to his or her patient record.

Undoubtedly, the aim of the provisions was to secure personal data against the risk of unauthorised access. The need for sufficient guarantees is particularly important when processing highly intimate and sensitive data, as in the instant case, where, in addition, the applicant worked in the same hospital where she was treated. The strict application of the law would therefore have constituted a substantial safeguard for the applicant's right secured by Article 8 of the Convention, making it possible, in particular, to police strictly access to an disclosure of health records.

However, the County Administrative Board found that, as regards the hospital in issue, the impugned health records system was such that it was not possible to retroactively clarify the use of patient records as it revealed only the five most recent consultations and that this information was deleted once the file had been returned to the archives. Therefore, the County Administrative Board could not determine whether information contained in the patient records of the applicant and her family had been given to or accessed by an unauthorised third person.

This finding was later upheld by the Court of Appeal following the applicant's civil action. The Court for its part would also note that it is not in dispute that at the material time the prevailing regime in the hospital allowed for the records to be read also by staff not directly involved in the applicant's treatment.

It is to be observed that the hospital took ad hoc measures to protect the applicant against unauthorised disclosure of her sensitive health information by amending the patient register in summer 1992 so that only the treating personnel had access to her patient record and the applicant was registered in the system under a false name and social security number. However, these mechanisms came too late for the applicant.

The Court of Appeal found that the applicant's testimony about the events, such as her colleagues' hints and remarks beginning in 1992 about her HIV infection, was reliable and credible. However, it did not find firm evidence that her patient record had been unlawfully consulted. The Court notes that the applicant lost her civil action because she was unable to prove on the facts a causal connection between the deficiencies in the access security rules and the dissemination of information about her medical condition. However, to place such a burden of proof on the applicant is to overlook the acknowledged deficiencies in the hospital's record keeping at the material time. It is plain that had the hospital provided a greater control over access to health records by restricting access to health professionals directly involved in the applicant's treatment or by maintaining a log of all persons who had accessed the applicant's medical file, the applicant would have been placed in a less disadvantaged position before the domestic courts. For the Court, what is decisive is that the records system in place in the hospital was clearly not in accordance with the legal requirements contained in the Personal Files Act, a fact that was not given due weight by the domestic courts.

The Government have not explained why the guarantees provided by the domestic law were not observed in the instant hospital. The Court notes that it was only in 1992, following the applicant's suspicions about an information leak, that only the treating clinic's personnel had access to her medical records. The Court also observes that it was only after the applicant's complaint to the County Administrative Board that a retrospective control of data access was established.

Consequently, the applicant's argument that her medical data were not adequately secured against unauthorised access at the material time must be upheld.

The Court notes that the mere fact that the domestic legislation provided the applicant with an opportunity to claim compensation for damages caused by an alleged unlawful disclosure of personal data was not sufficient to protect her private life. What is required in this connection is practical and

effective protection to exclude any possibility of unauthorised access occurring in the first place. Such protection was not given here.

The Court further held unanimously that there was no need to examine the complaints under Articles 6 and 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The applicant was awarded EUR 5,771.80 in respect of pecuniary damage, EUR 8,000 in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 20,000 for costs and expenses.

**36. Eur. Court HR, Liberty and others v. United Kingdom, judgment of 1 July 2008, application no. 58243/00. Interception by the Ministry of Defence of the external communications of civil-liberties organisations.**

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**no. 58243/00**  
**01.07.2008**

Press release issued by the Registrar

#### **LIBERTY AND OTHERS v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Interception by the Ministry of Defence of the external communications of civil-liberties organisations violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The Interception of Communications Act 1985 made it an offence intentionally to intercept communications by post or by means of a public telecommunications system. However, the Secretary of State was authorised to issue a warrant permitting the examination of communications if it was considered necessary in the interests of national security, to prevent or detect serious crime or to safeguard the State's economic well-being. Warrants could be issued in respect of communications (whether internal or external) linked to a particular address or person, or (under section 3(2) of the Act) to external communications generally, with no restriction on the person or premises concerned. Section 6 of the Act required the Secretary of State to make such arrangements as he considered necessary to ensure safeguards against abuses of power. Arrangements were reportedly put in place, but their precise details were not disclosed in the interests of national security. The Act also provided for a tribunal (the Interception of Communications Tribunal – ICT) to investigate complaints from any person who believed their communications had been intercepted and for the appointment of a Commissioner with reporting and review powers.

The applicants were a British and two Irish civil-liberties organisations. They alleged that between 1990 and 1997 their telephone, facsimile, e-mail and data communications, including legally privileged and confidential information, had been intercepted by an Electronic Test Facility operated by the British Ministry of Defence. Although they had lodged complaints with the ICT, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Investigatory Powers Tribunal (IPT) challenging the lawfulness of the interceptions, the domestic authorities found that there had been no contravention of the 1985 Act. The IPT specifically found that the right to intercept and access material covered by a warrant, and the criteria

by reference to which it was exercised, were sufficiently accessible and foreseeable to be in accordance with law. (The 1985 Act has now been replaced).

### **Law – Article 8**

The mere existence of legislation which allowed communications to be monitored secretly entailed a surveillance threat for all those to whom it might be applied and so constituted an interference with the applicants' rights. Section 3(2) of the 1985 Act allowed the British authorities a virtually unlimited discretion to intercept any communications between the United Kingdom and an external receiver described in the warrant. Warrants covered very broad classes of communications and, in principle, any person who sent or received any form of telecommunication outside the British Islands during the period in question could have had their communication intercepted. The authorities also had wide discretion to decide which communications from those physically captured should be listened to or read.

Although during the relevant period there had been internal regulations, manuals and instructions to provide for procedures to protect against abuse of power, and although the Commissioner appointed under the 1985 Act to oversee its workings had reported each year that the "arrangements" were satisfactory, the nature of those "arrangements" had not been contained in legislation or otherwise made available to the public. Further, although the Government had expressed concern that the publication of information regarding the arrangements during the period in question might have damaged the efficiency of the intelligence-gathering system or given rise to a security risk, the Court noted that extensive extracts from the Interception of Communications Code of Practice were now in the public domain, which suggested that it was possible to make public certain details about the operation of a scheme of external surveillance without compromising national security. In conclusion, domestic law at the relevant time had not indicated with sufficient clarity, so as to provide adequate protection against abuse of power, the scope or manner of exercise of the very wide discretion conferred on the State to intercept and examine external communications. In particular, it had not set out in a form accessible to the public any indication of the procedure to be followed for examining, sharing, storing and destroying intercepted material. The interference was not therefore "in accordance with the law".

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court considered that the finding of a violation constituted sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage caused to the applicants, and awarded them 7,500 euros (EUR) for costs and expenses.

**37. Eur. Court of HR, Cemalettin Canlı v. Turkey, judgment of 18 November 2008, application no. 22427/04. The applicant complained that the records kept by the police and the publication in the national press of the details of those records had had adverse effects on his private life within the meaning of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life). He further relied on Article 6 § 2 (presumption of innocence) and Article 13 (right to an effective remedy).**

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**no. 22427/04.  
18.11.2008**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **CEMALETTIN CANLI v. TURKEY**

Retention and publication of police records of the applicant breached Convention rights

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Cemalettin Canlı, is a Turkish national who was born in 1969 and lives in Ankara. In 2003 while criminal proceedings were pending against him, a police report entitled “information form on additional offences” was submitted to the court, mentioning two sets of criminal proceedings brought against him in the past for membership of illegal organisations. However, in 1990, the applicant had been acquitted in the first criminal case and the second set of proceedings had been discontinued. The applicant complained that the records kept by the police and the publication in the national press of the details of those records had had adverse effects on his private life within the meaning of Article 8. He further relied on Article 6 § 2 and Article 13.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that Mr Canlı had never been convicted by a court of law concerning the allegations of membership of illegal organisations. It thus considered that referring to the applicant as a “member” of such organisations in the police report had been potentially damaging to his reputation, and that the keeping and forwarding to the criminal court of that inaccurate police report had constituted an interference with Mr Canlı’s right to respect for his private life. The Court observed that the relevant Regulations obliged the police to include in their records all information regarding the outcome of any criminal proceedings relating to the accusations. Nevertheless, not only had the information in the report been false, but it had also omitted any mention of the applicant’s acquittal and the discontinuation of the criminal proceedings in 1990. Moreover, the decisions rendered in 1990 had not been appended to the report when it had been submitted to the court in 2003. Those failures, in the opinion of the Court, had been contrary to the unambiguous requirements of the Police Regulations and had removed a number of substantial procedural safeguards provided by domestic law for the protection of the applicant’s rights under Article 8. Accordingly, the Court found that the drafting and submission to the court by the police of the report in question had not been “in accordance with the law”. There was no need to examine separately the complaints under Articles 6 and 13.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

Mr Canlı was awarded EUR 5,000 in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 1,500 for costs and expenses.

**38. Eur. Court of HR, K.U. v. Finland, judgment of 2 December 2008, application no. 2872/02. The applicant complains about the invasion of his private life and the fact that no effective remedy existed under Finnish law to reveal the identity of the person who had posted the ad about him on the Internet dating site.**

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**no. 2872/02  
02.12.2008**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **K.U. v. FINLAND**

Finnish authorities' failure to protect a child's right to respect for private life following an advertisement being posted about him on an Internet dating site breached the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, K.U., is a Finnish national who was born in 1986. The case concerned the applicant's complaint that an advertisement of a sexual nature was posted about him on an Internet dating site and that, under Finnish legislation in place at the time, the police and the courts could not require the Internet provider to identify the person who had posted the ad.

In March 1999 an unknown individual posted the ad on an Internet dating site in the name of the applicant without his knowledge. The applicant was 12 years old at the time. The ad mentioned his age and year of birth and gave a detailed description of his physical characteristics. There was also a link to the applicant's web page where his picture and telephone number, accurate save for one digit, could be found. The ad announced that he was looking for an intimate relationship with a boy of his age or older "to show him the way".

The applicant became aware of that announcement when he received an e-mail from a man, offering to meet him and "to then see what he wanted".

The applicant's father requested the police to identify the person who had posted the ad in order to bring charges. The service provider, however, refused as it considered itself bound by the confidentiality of telecommunications as defined under Finnish law.

In a decision issued on 19 January 2001, Helsinki District Court also refused the police's request under the Criminal Investigations Act to oblige the service provider to divulge the identity of the person who had posted the ad. It found that there was no explicit legal provision in such a case, considered under domestic law to concern calumny, which could oblige the service provider to disregard professional secrecy and disclose such information.

Subsequently the Court of Appeal upheld that decision and the Supreme Court refused leave to appeal.

#### **Law – Article 8**

Although in terms of domestic law the applicant's case was considered from the point of view of calumny, the Court preferred to highlight the notion of private life, given the potential threat to the boy's physical and mental welfare and his vulnerable age.

The Court considered that the posting of the Internet advertisement about the applicant had been a criminal act which had resulted in a minor having been a target for paedophiles. It recalled that such conduct called for a criminal-law response and that effective deterrence had to be reinforced through adequate investigation and prosecution. Moreover, children and other vulnerable individuals were entitled to protection by the State from such grave interferences with their private life.

The incident had taken place in 1999, that is, at a time when it had been well-known that the Internet, precisely because of its anonymous character, could be used for criminal purposes. The widespread problem of child sexual abuse had also become well-known over the preceding decade. It could not therefore be argued that the Finnish Government had not had the opportunity to put in place a system to protect children from being targeted by paedophiles via the Internet.

Indeed, the legislature should have provided a framework for reconciling the confidentiality of Internet services with the prevention of disorder or crime and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. Although such a framework has subsequently been introduced under the Exercise of Freedom of Expression in Mass Media Act, it had not been in place at the relevant time, with the result that Finland had failed to protect the right to respect for the applicant's private life as the confidentiality requirement had been given precedence over his physical and moral welfare.

Given the finding under Article 8, the Court considered that there was no need to examine the complaint under Article 13

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded K.U. 3,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**39. Eur. Court of HR, S. and Marper v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 4 December 2008, applications nos. 30562/04 and 30566/04. The applicants complain under Articles 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the Convention about the retention by the authorities of their fingerprints, cellular samples and DNA profiles after their acquittal or discharge.**

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**nos. 30562/04 and 30566/04**  
**04.12.2008**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**S. AND MARPER v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Retention of applicants' fingerprints, cellular samples and DNA profiles after their acquittal or discharge violated the Convention

**Basic Facts**

The applicants, S. and Michael Marper, are both British nationals, who were born in 1989 and 1963 respectively. They live in Sheffield, the United Kingdom. The case concerned the retention by the authorities of the applicants' fingerprints, cellular samples and DNA profiles after criminal proceedings against them were terminated by an acquittal and were discontinued respectively.

On 19 January 2001 S. was arrested and charged with attempted robbery. He was aged eleven at the time. His fingerprints and DNA samples<sup>2</sup> were taken. He was acquitted on 14 June 2001. Mr Marper was arrested on 13 March 2001 and charged with harassment of his partner. His fingerprints and DNA samples were taken. On 14 June 2001 the case was formally discontinued as he and his partner had become reconciled.

Once the proceedings had been terminated, both applicants unsuccessfully requested that their fingerprints, DNA samples and profiles be destroyed. The information had been stored on the basis of a law authorising its retention without limit of time.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that cellular samples contained much sensitive information about an individual, including information about his or her health. In addition, samples contained a unique genetic code of great relevance to both the individual concerned and his or her relatives. Given the nature and the amount of personal information contained in cellular samples, their retention per se had to be regarded as interfering with the right to respect for the private lives of the individuals concerned.

In the Court's view, the capacity of DNA profiles to provide a means of identifying genetic relationships between individuals was in itself sufficient to conclude that their retention interfered with the right to the private life of those individuals. The possibility created by DNA profiles for drawing inferences about ethnic origin made their retention all the more sensitive and susceptible of affecting the right to private life. The Court concluded that the retention of both cellular samples and DNA profiles amounted to an interference with the applicants' right to respect for their private lives, within the meaning of Article 8 § 1 of the Convention.

The applicants' fingerprints were taken in the context of criminal proceedings and subsequently recorded on a nationwide database with the aim of being permanently kept and regularly processed by automated means for criminal-identification purposes. It was accepted that, because of the information they contain, the retention of cellular samples and DNA profiles had a more important impact on private life than the retention of fingerprints. However, the Court considered that fingerprints contain unique information about the individual concerned and their retention without his or her consent cannot be regarded as neutral or insignificant. The retention of fingerprints may thus in itself give rise to important private-life concerns and accordingly constituted an interference with the right to respect for private life. The Court noted that, under section 64 of the 1984 Act, the fingerprints or samples taken from a person in connection with the investigation of an offence could be retained after they had fulfilled the purposes for which they were taken. The retention of the applicants' fingerprint, biological samples and DNA profiles thus had a clear basis in the domestic law.

At the same time, Section 64 was far less precise as to the conditions attached to and arrangements for the storing and use of this personal information.

The Court reiterated that, in this context, it was essential to have clear, detailed rules governing the scope and application of measures, as well as minimum safeguards. However, in view of its analysis and conclusions as to whether the interference was necessary in a democratic society, the Court did not find it necessary to decide whether the wording of section 64 met the "quality of law" requirements within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention.

The Court accepted that the retention of fingerprint and DNA information pursued a legitimate purpose, namely the detection, and therefore, prevention of crime.

The Court noted that fingerprints, DNA profiles and cellular samples constituted personal data within the meaning of the Council of Europe Convention of 1981 for the protection of individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data.

The Court indicated that the domestic law had to afford appropriate safeguards to prevent any such use of personal data as could be inconsistent with the guarantees of Article 8 of the Convention. The Court added that the need for such safeguards was all the greater where the protection of personal data undergoing automatic processing was concerned, not least when such data were used for police purposes.

The interests of the individuals concerned and the community as a whole in protecting personal data, including fingerprint and DNA information, could be outweighed by the legitimate interest in the prevention of crime (the Court referred to Article 9 of the Data Protection Convention). However, the intrinsically private character of this information required the Court to exercise careful scrutiny of any State measure authorising its retention and use by the authorities without the consent of the person concerned.

The issue to be considered by the Court in this case was whether the retention of the fingerprint and DNA data of the applicants, as persons who had been suspected, but not convicted, of certain criminal offences, was necessary in a democratic society. The Court took due account of the core principles of the relevant instruments of the Council of Europe and the law and practice of the other Contracting States, according to which retention of data was to be proportionate in relation to the purpose of collection and limited in time. These principles had been consistently applied by the Contracting States in the police sector, in accordance with the 1981 Data Protection Convention and subsequent Recommendations by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

As regards, more particularly, cellular samples, most of the Contracting States allowed these materials to be taken in criminal proceedings only from individuals suspected of having committed offences of a certain minimum gravity. In the great majority of the Contracting States with functioning DNA databases, samples and DNA profiles derived from those samples were required to be removed or destroyed either immediately or within a certain limited time after acquittal or discharge. A restricted number of exceptions to this principle were allowed by some Contracting States.

The Court noted that England, Wales and Northern Ireland appeared to be the only jurisdictions within the Council of Europe to allow the indefinite retention of fingerprint and DNA material of any person of any age suspected of any recordable offence.

It observed that the protection afforded by Article 8 of the Convention would be unacceptably weakened if the use of modern scientific techniques in the criminal-justice system were allowed at any cost and without carefully balancing the potential benefits of the extensive use of such techniques against important private-life interests. Any State claiming a pioneer role in the development of new technologies bore special responsibility for striking the right balance in this regard.

The Court was struck by the blanket and indiscriminate nature of the power of retention in England and Wales. In particular, the data in question could be retained irrespective of the nature or gravity of the offence with which the individual was originally suspected or of the age of the suspected offender; the retention was not time-limited; and there existed only limited possibilities for an acquitted individual to have the data removed from the nationwide database or to have the materials destroyed.

The Court expressed a particular concern at the risk of stigmatisation, stemming from the fact that persons in the position of the applicants, who had not been convicted of any offence and were entitled to the presumption of innocence, were treated in the same way as convicted persons. It was true that the retention of the applicants' private data could not be equated with the voicing of suspicions.

Nonetheless, their perception that they were not being treated as innocent was heightened by the fact that their data were retained indefinitely in the same way as the data of convicted persons, while the data of those who had never been suspected of an offence were required to be destroyed.

The Court further considered that the retention of un-convicted persons' data could be especially harmful in the case of minors such as the first applicant, given their special situation and the importance of their development and integration in society. It considered that particular attention had to be paid to the protection of juveniles from any detriment that could result from the retention by the authorities of their private data following acquittals of a criminal offence.

In conclusion, the Court found that the blanket and indiscriminate nature of the powers of retention of the fingerprints, cellular samples and DNA profiles of persons suspected but not convicted of offences, as applied in the case of the present applicants, failed to strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests, and that the respondent State had overstepped any acceptable margin of appreciation in this regard. Accordingly, the retention in question constituted a disproportionate interference with the applicants' right to respect for private life and could not be regarded as necessary in a democratic society. The Court concluded unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 8 in this case.

In the light of the reasoning that led to its conclusion under Article 8 above, the Court considered unanimously that it was not necessary to examine separately the complaint under Article 14.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court considered that the finding of a violation, with the consequences that this would have for the future, could be regarded as constituting sufficient just satisfaction in respect of the non-pecuniary damage sustained by the applicants. It noted that, in accordance with Article 46 of the Convention, it would be for the respondent State to implement, under the supervision of the Committee of Ministers, appropriate general and/or individual measures to fulfil its obligations to secure the right of the applicants and other persons in their position to respect for their private life. The Court awarded the applicants 42,000 euros (EUR) in respect of costs and expenses, less the EUR 2,613.07 already paid to them in legal aid.

**40. Eur. Court of HR, *Bykov v. Russia*, judgment of 10 March 2009, application no. 4378/02. The applicant complains under Article 5 § 3 (right to liberty and security), Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 6 (right to a fair trial) of the European Convention on Human Rights about the insufficient reasons given for extending the applicant's pre-trial detention, the use of a surveillance technique which was not accompanied by adequate safeguards against possible abuses.**

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**no. 4378/02  
10.03.2009**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **BYKOV v. RUSSIA**

Use of surveillance technique was not accompanied by adequate safeguards

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Anatoliy Petrovich Bykov, is a Russian national who was born in 1960 and lives in Krasnoyarsk (Russia). He was chairman of the board of the Krasnoyarsk Aluminium Plant from 1997 to 1999. At the time of his arrest in October 2000 he was a major shareholder and an executive of a corporation called OAO Krasenergomash-Holding. He was also a member of the Krasnoyarsk Regional Parliamentary Assembly.

The applicant complained, in particular, about a covert recording used as evidence in the criminal proceedings against him and about the length of his pre-trial detention.

In September 2000 Mr Bykov allegedly ordered V., a member of his entourage, to kill Mr S., a former business associate. V. did not comply with the order, but on 18 September 2000 he reported the applicant to the Federal Security Service ("the FSB").

The FSB and the police decided to conduct a covert operation to obtain evidence of the applicant's intention to murder S. On 29 September 2000 the police staged the discovery of two dead bodies at S.'s home. They officially announced in the media that one of those killed had been identified as S. The other man was his business partner, Mr I.

On 3 October 2000 V. went to see the applicant at his home. He carried a hidden radio-transmitting device while a police officer outside received and recorded the transmission. Following the instructions, he had been given, V. engaged the applicant in conversation, telling him that he had carried out the murder. As proof he handed the applicant several objects borrowed from S. and I. The police obtained a 16-minute recording of the conversation between V. and the applicant.

On 4 October 2000 the applicant's house was searched. The objects V. had given him were seized. The applicant was arrested and remanded in custody. He was charged with conspiracy to commit murder and conspiracy to acquire, possess and handle firearms.

The applicant's pre-trial detention was extended several times and his numerous appeals and requests for release were rejected because of the gravity of the charges against him and the risk that he might abscond and bring pressure to bear on the witnesses.

Two voice experts were appointed to examine the recording of the applicant's conversation with V. They found that V. had shown subordination to the applicant, that the applicant had shown no sign of mistrusting V.'s confession to the murder and that he had insistently questioned V. on the technical details of its execution. They established that V. and the applicant had a close relationship and that the applicant had played an instructive role in the conversation.

On 19 June 2002 the applicant was found guilty on both counts and sentenced to six and a half years' imprisonment. He was conditionally released on five years' probation. The sentence was upheld on appeal on 1 October 2002.

On 22 June 2004 the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation examined the case in supervisory proceedings. It found the applicant guilty of "incitement to commit a crime involving a murder", and not "conspiracy to murder". The rest of the judgment, including the sentence, remained unchanged.

### **Law – Articles 5 § 3, 6 § 1 and 8**

On **Article 5 § 3**, the Court reiterated that continued pre-trial detention could be justified only if there were specific indications of a genuine public-interest requirement which, notwithstanding the presumption of innocence, outweighed the rule of respect for individual liberty laid down in Article 5 of the Convention. It noted that in the present case the applicant had been kept in pre-trial detention for one year, eight months and 15 days and that all his applications for release had been refused on the grounds of the gravity of the charges and the likelihood of his fleeing, obstructing the course of justice or exerting pressure on witnesses. The Court found, however, that those grounds had not been at all substantiated by the courts concerned, particularly during the initial stages of the proceedings.

As regards **Article 6 § 1**, the Court reiterated that Article 6 guaranteed the right to a fair trial as a whole, and did not lay down any rules on the admissibility of evidence as such, even evidence obtained unlawfully in terms of domestic law. In that connection it observed that the applicant had been able to challenge the methods employed by the police, in the adversarial procedure at first instance and on appeal. He had thus been able to argue that the evidence adduced against him had been obtained unlawfully and that the disputed recording had been misinterpreted. The domestic courts had addressed all these arguments in detail and had dismissed each of them in reasoned decisions. The Court further noted that the statements by the applicant that had been secretly recorded had not been made under any form of duress; had not been directly taken into account by the domestic courts, which had relied more on the expert report drawn up on the recording; and had been corroborated by a body of physical evidence. The Court thus concluded that the applicant's defence rights and his right not to incriminate himself had been respected.

With regards to **Article 8**, the Court observed that it was not disputed that the measures carried out by the police had amounted to interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life. It pointed out that for such interference to be compatible with the Convention, it had to be in accordance with the law and necessary in a democratic society for one of the purposes listed in paragraph 2 of Article 8. The Court noted that the Russian Operational-Search Activities Act was expressly intended to protect individual privacy by requiring judicial authorisation for any operational activities that might interfere with the privacy of the home or the privacy of communications by wire or mail services. In Mr Bykov's case, the domestic courts had held that since V. had been invited to the applicant's home and no wire or mail services had been involved (as the conversation had been recorded by a remote radio-transmitting device), the police operation had not breached the regulations in force.

In that connection the Court reiterated that in order for the lawfulness requirement in Article 8 to be satisfied with regard to the interception of communications for the purpose of a police investigation, the law had to give a sufficiently clear indication as to the circumstances in which and the conditions on

which the police authorities were empowered to resort to such measures. In the present case it considered that the use of a remote radio-transmitting device to record the conversation between V. and the applicant was virtually identical to telephone tapping, in terms of the nature and degree of the intrusion into the privacy of the individual concerned. It noted in that connection that since the law regulated only the interception of communications by wire and mail services, the legal discretion enjoyed by the police authorities had been too broad and had not been accompanied by adequate safeguards against various possible abuses.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 5 § 3 and 8. No violation of Article 6 § 1

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant, by 12 votes to five, 1,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and, unanimously, EUR 25,000 for costs and expenses.

### **Separate Opinions**

Two concurring opinions were expressed, by Judges Cabral Barreto and Kovler. Judge Costa expressed a partly dissenting opinion. Judge Spielmann, joined by Judges Rozakis, Tulkens, Casadevall and Mijović, also expressed a partly dissenting opinion. The opinions are attached to the judgment.

**41. *Eur. Court of HR, K.H. and others v. Slovakia*, judgment of 28 April 2009, application no. 32881/04. The applicants complain under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), and Article 6§ 1 (access to court) and Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention on Human Rights about not having been allowed to make photocopies of their medical records, the impossibility for the applicants or their lawyers to obtain photocopies of their medical records having limited their effective access to court and not guaranteeing a remedy to challenge a law itself.**

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**no. 32881/04**  
**28.04.2009**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **K.H. AND OTHERS v. SLOVAKIA**

The lack of access to applicant's medical record entails breaches of the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

The applicants are eight female Slovak nationals of Roma ethnic origin. They were treated in two hospitals in eastern Slovakia during their pregnancies and deliveries, following which none of them could conceive a child again despite their repeated attempts. The applicants suspected that the reason for their infertility might be that a sterilisation procedure was performed on them during their caesarean delivery by medical personnel in the hospitals concerned.

In order to obtain a medical analysis of the reasons for their infertility and possible treatment, the applicants authorised their lawyers to review and photocopy their medical records as potential evidence in future civil proceedings for damages, and to ensure that such documents and evidence were not

destroyed or lost. The lawyers made two attempts, in August and September 2002 respectively, to obtain photocopies of the medical records, but were not allowed to do so by the hospitals' management.

The applicants sued the hospitals concerned, asking the courts to order them to release the medical records to the applicants' authorised legal representatives and to allow the latter to obtain photocopies of the documents included in the records.

In June 2003, the courts ordered the hospitals to permit the applicants and their authorised representatives to consult the medical records and to make handwritten excerpts thereof, but dismissed their request to photocopy the documents with a view to preventing their abuse. They also held that the applicants were not prevented to have any future claim, which they might bring for damages, determined in accordance with the requirements of the Convention. In particular, under the relevant law the medical institutions were obliged to submit the required information to, among others, the courts, for example in the context of civil proceedings concerning a patient's claim for damages.

Subsequently seven applicants were able to access their files and to make photocopies of them in accordance with the newly introduced Health Care Act of 2004. As regards the eighth applicant, the hospital only provided her with a simple record of a surgical procedure indicating that surgery had been performed on her and that she had been sterilised during the procedure.

### **Law – Articles 8, 6 § 1 and 13**

As regards **Article 8**, the Court noted that the applicants had complained that they had been unable to exercise their right of effective access to information concerning their health and reproductive abilities at a certain moment in time. This question had been linked to their private and family lives, and thus protected under Article 8 of the Convention. The Court considered that persons who, like the applicants, wished to obtain photocopies of documents containing their personal data, should not have been obliged to make specific justification as to why they needed the copies. It should have been rather for the authority in possession of the data to show that there had been compelling reasons for not providing that facility.

Given that the applicants had obtained judicial orders permitting them to consult their medical records in their entirety, having denied them the possibility to make photocopies of those records had not been sufficiently justified by the authorities. To avoid the risk of abuse of medical data it would have been sufficient to put in place legislative safeguards with a view to strictly limiting the circumstances under which such data could be disclosed, as well as the scope of persons entitled to have access to the files. The Court observed that the new Health Care Act adopted in 2004 had been compatible with that requirement; however, it had come into play too late to affect the situation of the applicants in this case.

With regards to **Article 6 § 1**, the Court accepted the applicants' argument that they had been in a state of uncertainty as regards their state of health and reproductive ability following their treatment in the hospitals concerned. It also agreed that obtaining the photocopies had been essential for their assessment of the perspectives of seeking redress before the courts in respect of any shortcoming in their medical treatment. As the domestic law applicable at the time had limited excessively the possibility of the applicants or their lawyers to present their cases to the court in an effective manner, and the Government had not presented reasons sufficient to justify this restriction, the Court held that there had been a violation of Article 6 § 1.

Finally, on **Article 13**, the Court found no violation of this Article noting that it did not guarantee a remedy to challenge a law as such before a domestic authority. It also considered unnecessary to examine separately the applicants' complaint under Article 13 in combination with Article 6 § 1, as it held that the requirements of Article 13 were less strict and absorbed by those of Article 6 § 1.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 8 and 6 § 1. No violation of Article 13

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded to each applicant 3,500 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and jointly to all applicants' EUR 8,000 for costs and expenses.

**Separate Opinions**

Judge Šikuta expressed a partly dissenting opinion, which is annexed to the judgment.

**42. Eur. Court of HR, Szuluk v. The United Kingdom, judgment of 2 June 2009, application no. 36936/05. The applicant complains under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights about the monitoring by prison authorities of medical correspondence between the applicant – a convicted prisoner – and his external specialist doctor.**

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**no. 36936/05  
02.06.2009**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**SZULUK v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Monitoring of medical correspondence of a convicted prisoner by the prison authorities breached the  
Convention

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Edward Szuluk, is a British national who was born in 1955 and is currently in prison in Staffordshire (United Kingdom).

Mr Szuluk was sentenced in November 2001 to 14 years' imprisonment for drugs offences. In April 2001, while on bail pending trial, the applicant suffered a brain haemorrhage for which he had two operations. Following his discharge back to prison, he was required to go to hospital every six months for a specialist check-up.

The applicant complained, unsuccessfully, before the local courts that his correspondence with the neuro-radiology specialist who was supervising his hospital treatment had been monitored by a prison medical officer.

**Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that it was clear and not contested that there had been an “interference by a public authority” with the exercise of the applicant’s right to respect for his correspondence. It further observed that it was accepted by the parties that the reading of the applicant’s correspondence had been governed by law and that it had been aimed at the prevention of crime and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Mr Szuluk submitted that the monitoring of his correspondence with his medical specialist inhibited their communication and prejudiced reassurance that he was receiving adequate medical treatment while in

prison. Given the severity of his medical condition, the Court found the applicant's concerns to be understandable. Moreover, there had not been any grounds to suggest that Mr Szuluk had ever abused the confidentiality given to his medical correspondence in the past or that he had any intention of doing so in the future. Furthermore, although he had been detained in a high security prison which also held Category A (high risk prisoners), he had himself always been defined as Category B (prisoners for whom the highest security conditions were not considered necessary).

Nor did the Court share the Court of Appeal's view that the applicant's medical specialist, whose bona fides had never been challenged, could be "intimidated or tricked" into transmitting illicit messages or that that risk had been sufficient to justify the interference with the applicant's rights. This was particularly so since the Court of Appeal had further acknowledged that the importance of unimpeded correspondence with secretarial staff of MPs (Members of Parliament), although subject to the same kind of risks, outweighed any risk of abuse.

Indeed, uninhibited correspondence with a medical specialist in the context of a prisoner suffering from a life-threatening condition should be given no less protection than the correspondence between a prisoner and an MP. Moreover, the Court of Appeal had conceded that it could, in some cases, be disproportionate to refuse confidentiality to a prisoner's medical correspondence and changes had since been enacted to the relevant domestic law to that effect. The Court also found that the Government had failed to provide sufficient reasons to explain why the risk of abuse involved in correspondence with named doctors whose exact address, qualifications and bona fides were not in question should be perceived as greater than the risk involved in correspondence with lawyers.

The Court therefore concluded that the monitoring of Mr Szuluk's medical correspondence had not struck a fair balance with his right to respect for his correspondence.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant 1,000 euros (EUR) for non-pecuniary damage and EUR 6,000 for costs and expenses.

**43. Eur. Court of HR, Iordachi and others v. Moldova, judgment of 14 September 2009, application no. 25198/02. Respect for private life Status of potential victims; lack of clarity or adequate safeguards in legislation on interception of communications: violation.**

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**no. 25198/02**

**14.09.2009**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**IORDACHI AND OTHERS v. MOLDOVA**

The national legislation did not provide adequate safeguards on interception of communications of the applicants

**Basic Facts**

The applicants believed that they were at serious risk of having their telecommunications tapped as they were members of a Moldovan non-governmental organisation specialising in the representation of applicants before the Court. Although they did not claim that any of their communications had in fact been intercepted, they considered that the domestic legislation did not contain sufficient guarantees against abuse and pointed to Supreme Court statistics showing that over 98% of all requests by the investigating bodies for permission to monitor communications had been authorised by the domestic courts in the years 2005-2007. The relevant legislation is contained in the Operational Investigators Activities Act 1994 and the Code of Criminal Procedure, both as amended. It permits the authorities, inter alia, to intercept telephone and other conversations with a view to preventing crime and protecting national security.

**Law: Article 8**

(a) Interference: An individual could, under certain conditions, claim to be the victim of a violation occasioned by the mere existence of secret measures or of legislation permitting secret measures, without having to allege that such measures had in fact been applied to him. The relevant conditions were to be determined in each case according to the Convention rights alleged to have been infringed, the secret character of the measures objected to, and the connection between the applicant and those measures. The Court could not exclude the possibility that secret surveillance measures had been applied to the applicants as (i) under the Operational Investigative Activities Act the authorities were authorised to intercept communications of categories of persons with whom the applicants, in their capacity as human-rights lawyers, had extensive contact; (b) the NGO of which the applicants were members had acted in a representative capacity in roughly half the Moldovan cases communicated to the Government; and (c) in a move that had been endorsed by the Government, the Prosecutor General had threatened to prosecute any lawyer who damaged the image of the Republic of Moldova by complaining to international human-rights organisations. The mere existence of the legislation thus entailed a menace of surveillance that necessarily struck at freedom of communication and so constituted interference.

(b) "In accordance with the law": The issue here was whether the domestic legislation satisfied the foreseeability requirement. As regards the initial stage of the telephone-surveillance procedure (the grant of authorisation), despite improvements made by amendments in 2003, the legislation lacked clarity and detail; in particular, it did not define clearly the nature of the offences for which interception might be sought or the categories of persons liable to have their telephones tapped, which, in addition

to suspects and defendants, included “any other person involved in a criminal offence”. Further, the law did not prevent the prosecution authorities from seeking a new interception warrant after the expiry of the initial six-month period and the legislation was unclear as to under what circumstances and against whom a warrant could be obtained in non-criminal cases. In respect of the second stage (surveillance proper), the investigating judge’s role was unduly limited as the law made no provision for acquainting him with the results of the surveillance and did not require him to review whether the statutory requirements had been complied with. Indeed, it appeared to place such supervisory duties on the prosecuting authorities. Moreover, the interception procedure and guarantees appeared only to apply in the context of pending criminal proceedings and not to other cases. There were no clear rules on the procedures for screening, preserving and destroying collected data.

Lastly, there was no procedure governing the activity of the Parliamentary special commission responsible for exercising overall control of the system or for protecting the secrecy of lawyer-client communications. In the light of the fact that the Moldovan courts had authorised virtually all requests for interception made by the prosecuting authorities in 2007, the Court concluded that the investigating judges did not address themselves to the existence of compelling justification for authorising measures of secret surveillance and that the system was largely overused. In conclusion, the law did not provide adequate protection against abuse of State power and so was not “in accordance with the law”.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicants 3,500 euros (EUR), jointly, for costs and expenses.

**44. Eur. Court of HR, Tsourlakis v. Greece, judgment of 15 October 2009, application no. 50796/07. The applicant complains under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights about being prevented from consulting the report of the Child Welfare Society about his son.**

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**no. 50796/07**

**15.10.2009**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**TSOURLAKIS V. GREECE**

Father prevented from consulting welfare report about his son

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Mr Konstantinos Tsourlakis, was born in 1956 and lives in Athens. In 1989 he married and the couple had a son. In August 2000 he and his wife separated.

By a judgment of 21 November 2001, the applicant’s wife was awarded sole custody of the child, while the applicant was given the use of the matrimonial home. The applicant and his wife appealed. In an interlocutory decision of 31 March 2004, a welfare report was ordered, to be prepared by the Athens Child Welfare Society (“the Society”).

In November 2004 the Society’s report was filed at the hearing before the Court of Appeal. In a judgment of 19 May 2005, the Court of Appeal granted permanent custody of the child to his mother.

Mr Tsourlakis attempted to obtain a copy of the Society’s report. The Society informed him that the report was a confidential document prepared for the exclusive attention of the Court of Appeal. After applying to the Ombudsman’s office, which informed him that he could not obtain a copy of the report

because he had not addressed his request via the competent prosecutor, Mr Tsourlakis applied to the prosecutor at the Criminal Court. The latter rejected his request, indicating in two sentences added by hand to the applicant's letter that the request concerned personal information about a minor, of which the applicant had no legitimate interest in being apprised.

### **Law – Article 8**

With regard to the complaint under Article 6, the Court noted that Mr Tsourlakis had not complained at any point during the proceedings that his inability to consult the Society's report had infringed his procedural rights and his right to a fair hearing. This complaint therefore had to be rejected for failure to exhaust domestic remedies, in accordance with Article 35 of the Convention.

The Court further observed that the part of the applicant's Article 8 complaint relating to the use of the Society's report before the Court of Appeal covered the same ground as his complaint under Article 6, which the Court had declared inadmissible.

With regard to the exercise by Mr Tsourlakis of his right to effective access to information concerning his private and family life following the Court of Appeal judgment, the Court noted that the domestic legislation concerning the use made of welfare reports was less than clear and that the only explanations which the applicant had received had come from the Ombudsman's office.

The information contained in the welfare report had been relevant to Mr Tsourlakis' relationship with his son. In that regard, the courts had acknowledged the affection shown by the father towards his child, which was reaffirmed by his persistent efforts to obtain custody. Being informed of any negative findings contained in the report would have enabled the applicant to take them into account in order to improve the relationship. Moreover, Mr Tsourlakis had had a legitimate claim to be informed of the use made of the details he had provided for the purposes of compiling the report.

The Government had not given reasons for the refusal to allow the applicant to consult the report and had not adduced any compelling reasons to justify the failure to disclose the contents of the document, which contained personal information of direct concern to the applicant. Accordingly, the authorities had not ensured effective observance of the applicant's right to respect for his private and family life.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court awarded the applicant 5,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**45. Eur. Court of HR, Haralambie v. Romania, judgment of 27 October 2009, application no. 21737/03. The applicant complains under Article 6§ 1 (access to court) and Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights about the proceedings concerning the restoration of the land that had belonged to his mother and the obstacles to his right of access to the personal file created on him by the former secret services.**

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**no. 21737/03  
27.10.2009**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **HARALAMBIE v. ROMANIA**

Six years to access a personal file drawn up by the secret services during the Communist period

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Mr Nicolae Haralambie, is a Romanian national who was born in 1930 and lives in Bucharest.

He claimed that he continued to suffer the consequences of the persecution to which he was subjected after the communist regime was established in 1945. At the time this had taken the form, among other things, of the confiscation of agricultural land belonging to his mother. Following a final decision against him by a county court in 2003 concerning a request for restoration of those plots of land, Mr Haralambie asked the National Council for the Study of the Archives of the former Secret Services of the Communist Regime – the *Securitate* – (“the CNSAS”), whether he had been subjected to surveillance measures in the past.

On 28 March 2003 he was informed that a file in his name did exist but that, since the archives were held by the Romanian Intelligence Service, it was necessary to wait for his file to be transferred by that Service. On 19 October 2005 a file in the applicant’s name was transmitted to the CNSAS by the Romanian Intelligence Service.

On 19 May 2008 the CNSAS indicated that the date of birth in the file did not correspond to that of the applicant and that checks were therefore necessary. A few days later the CNSAS invited the applicant to come and consult the file created in his name by the *Securitate*, which he did on 23 June 2008. He was given a copy of the file, which bore the annotations “opened on 12 April 1983” and “the file was microfilmed on 23 July 1996”.

A note indicated that Mr Haralambie had commented unfavourably on politics and on the economic situation. An undertaking by the applicant, dating from 1979, to collaborate with the *Securitate* had also been included, with official comments to the effect that he was evading his security work and that he would be placed under investigation and that his correspondence would be monitored.

#### **Law – Articles 6 § 1 and Article 1 of Protocol No. 1**

The fact that Mr Haralambie’s action concerning the location of the disputed land had been dismissed by the courts without an examination of the merits of the case, on the ground that the administrative authorities had sole jurisdiction in that area, had impaired the very essence of his right of access to a court. Accordingly, the Court concluded unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 6 § 1. Having regard to this finding, the Court found it unnecessary to examine the cases under Article 1 of Protocol No. 1.

## Law – Article 8

The Court reiterated the vital interest for individuals who were the subject of personal files held by the public authorities to be able to have access to them and emphasised that the authorities had a duty to provide an effective procedure for obtaining access to such information.

A Romanian law, amended in 2006, had established an administrative procedure for access to the Securitate files, which set the time-limit for transfer of archives at 60 days. However, it was not until six years after his first request – and thus well beyond this time-limit – that Mr Haralambie was invited to consult his file. The legislative amendment in 2006 indicated the need for speed in such a procedure, a fact recognised by the Romanian authorities, especially since, in this particular case, the applicant was already elderly.

Mr Haralambie's file had been available since 1996 in the form of microfilms, and had been in the possession of the CNSAS since October 2005. The Court considered that neither the quantity of files transferred nor shortcomings in the archive system justified a delay of six years in granting his request. As the authorities had not provided Mr Haralambie with an effective and accessible procedure to enable him to obtain access to his personal files within a reasonable time, the Court concluded unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 8.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 6 § 1 and Article 8

## Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)

The Court awarded the applicant 4,000 euros (EUR) in respect of pecuniary damage and EUR 2,000 in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**46. Eur. Court of HR, B.B. v. France, Gardel v. France, M.B. v. France, judgments of 17 December 2009, applications nos. 5335/06, 16428/05, 22115/06. The applicants complain under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights about their inclusion in the Sex Offender Database and the retroactive application of the legislation under which it was created.**

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**nos. 5335/06, 16428/05, 22115/06**  
**17.12.2009**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**B.B. V. FRANCE**  
**GARDEL V. FRANCE**  
**M.B. V. FRANCE**

Inclusion in national sex offender database did not infringe the right to respect for private life

## Basic Facts

The applicants are three French nationals who live in France: Bernard B.B., who was born in 1959 and lives in Toulouse; Fabrice Gardel, who was born in 1962 and is currently held in Monmédy Prison; and M.B., who was born in 1943 and lives in Millau. They were sentenced, in 1996, 2003 and 2001

respectively, to terms of imprisonment for rape of 15 year old minors by a person in a position of authority.

On 9 March 2004 Law no. 2004-204 "adapting the judicial system to the evolution of criminality" created a national judicial database of sex offenders (later extended to include violent offenders). The provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure concerning this Sex Offender Database entered into force on 30 June 2005.

In August 2005, November 2005 and February 2006, respectively, the applicants were notified of their inclusion in this database on account of their convictions and on the basis of the transitional provisions of the Law of 9 March 2004.

### **Law – Articles 7 and 8**

The obligation arising from registration in the national Sex Offender Database pursued a purely preventive and dissuasive aim and could not be regarded as punitive in nature or as constituting a criminal sanction. The fact of having to prove one's address every year and to declare changes of address within a fortnight, albeit for a period of thirty years, was not serious enough for it to be treated as a "penalty".

The Court thus took the view that inclusion in the national Sex Offender Database and the corresponding obligations for those concerned did not constitute a "penalty" within the meaning of Article 7 § 1 of the Convention and that they had to be regarded as a preventive measure to which the principle of non-retrospective legislation, as provided for in that Article, did not apply. This complaint was thus rejected. The protection of personal data was of fundamental importance to a person's enjoyment of respect for his or her private and family life, all the more so where such data underwent automatic processing, not least when such data were used for police purposes.

The Court could not call into question the prevention-related objectives of the database. Sexual offences were clearly a particularly reprehensible form of criminal activity from which children and other vulnerable people had the right to be protected effectively by the State.

Moreover, as the applicants had an effective possibility of submitting a request for the deletion of the data, the Court took the view that the length of the data conservation – thirty years maximum – was not disproportionate in relation to the aim pursued by the retention of the information.

Lastly, the consultation of such data by the court, police and administrative authorities, was subject to a duty of confidentiality and was restricted to precisely determined circumstances

The Court concluded that the system of inclusion in the national judicial database of sex offenders, as applied to the applicants, had struck a fair balance between the competing private and public interests at stake, and held unanimously that there had been no violation of Article 8.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Articles 7 and 8

**47. Eur. Court of HR, Dalea v. France, judgment of 2 February 2010, application 58243/00. Inability to access or secure rectification of personal data in Schengen database. The Court ruled that applicant's inability to gain personal access to all the information he had requested could not in itself prove that the interference was not justified by national security interests**

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**no. 58243/00**

**01.07.2008**

Press release issued by the Registrar

## **DALEA v. FRANCE**

Inability to access or secure rectification of personal data in Schengen database

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, a Romanian national, was denied a visa in 1997 for a visit to Germany, and the following year for a visit to France, on the ground that he had been reported by the French authorities to the Schengen Information System for the purposes of being refused entry. The applicant applied to the French National Data-Protection Commission ("the CNIL") seeking access to his personal data in the French Schengen database and the rectification or deletion of that data. The CNIL carried out the requested checks and then indicated that the procedure before it was now exhausted. The applicant brought an action for judicial review before the *Conseil d'Etat*, which found that he had received information concerning his data entry in the French Schengen database and that his action had therefore become devoid of object. The *Conseil d'Etat* further found that, on the basis of the investigation carried out, it was impossible to ascertain the reasons for the applicant's inclusion in the database and that it could not therefore be assessed whether the CNIL's denial of his request for rectification or deletion had been lawful. The CNIL indicated that the applicant had been reported to the Schengen Information System at the request of the French Security Intelligence Agency ("the DST"), which alone could provide the relevant information to enable the *Conseil d'Etat* to ascertain whether or not the applicant's request for rectification of his data had been well-founded. In 2006 the *Conseil d'Etat* observed that, having regard to all the material in the case file, the grounds given by the CNIL for its decision not to rectify or delete the data concerning the applicant provided valid justification for that decision. Accordingly, the applicant's action for the annulment of the CNIL's decision had been ill-founded.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Convention did not as such guarantee the right of an alien to enter or to reside in a particular country. In so far as the applicant's professional relations, especially with French and German companies and with figures from political and economic circles in France, could be regarded as constituting "private life" within the meaning of Article 8, the interference with this right caused by the reporting of the applicant by the French authorities to the Schengen Information System had been in accordance with the law and had pursued the legitimate aim of protecting national security. The applicant had not shown how he had actually suffered as a result of his inability to travel in the Schengen area. He had merely referred, without giving particulars, to a considerable loss on account of the effect on his company's performance, and had pointed out that he had not been able to go to France for surgery that he had ultimately obtained in Switzerland, but this had not apparently had any particular consequences for his state of health. The French authorities' interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life had therefore been proportionate to the aim pursued and necessary in a democratic society. In so far as the applicant had complained of interference with his private life solely on account of his inclusion in the Schengen Information System for a long period, the Court reiterated

that everyone affected by a measure based on national security grounds had to be guaranteed protection against arbitrariness. Admittedly, his inclusion in the database had barred him access to all countries that applied the Schengen Agreement. However, in the area of entry regulation, States had a broad margin of appreciation in taking measures to secure the protection against arbitrariness that an individual in such a situation was entitled to expect. The applicant had been able to apply for review of the measure at issue, first by the CNIL, then by the *Conseil d'Etat*. Whilst the applicant had never been given the opportunity to challenge the precise grounds for his inclusion in the Schengen database, he had been granted access to all the other data concerning him and had been informed that considerations relating to State security, defence and public safety had given rise to the report on the initiative of the DST. The applicant's inability to gain personal access to all the information he had requested could not in itself prove that the interference was not justified by national security interests. The French authorities' interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life had therefore been proportionate to the aim pursued and necessary in a democratic society.

**Conclusion:** inadmissible

**48. Eur. Court of HR, Ciubotaru v. Moldova, judgment of 27 April 2010, application no. 27138/04. The applicant complains under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights about the authorities' refusal to register his Romanian ethnic identity in his identity papers.**

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**no. 27138/04**  
**27.04.2010**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **CIUBOTARU v. MOLDOVA**

Refusal to change ethnic identity in personal identity papers breached the convention

#### **Principal facts**

The applicant, Mihai Ciubotaru, is a Moldovan national who was born in 1952 and lives in Chişinău. He is a writer and a professor of French.

In 2002, when applying to have his old Soviet identity card replaced with a Moldovan one, he submitted that his ethnicity was Romanian. As he was advised that his application would not be accepted unless he indicated his identity was Moldovan, he complied.

Shortly afterwards he requested the relevant State authority to change his identity from "Moldovan" to "Romanian". His request was refused with the argument that since his parents had not been recorded as ethnic Romanians in their birth and marriage certificates, it was impossible for him to be recorded as an ethnic Romanian. Mr Ciubotaru complained unsuccessfully numerous times about it to various officials, following which he brought proceedings in court against the relevant State authority. He asked to have his identity changed in his papers as he did not consider himself an ethnic Moldovan. His request was dismissed by the domestic courts with the same argument as the one advanced by the State administrative authority.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that, along with such aspects as name, gender, religion and sexual orientation, an individual's ethnic identity constituted an essential aspect of his or her private life and identity, and thus fell under the protection of Article 8.

Aware of the highly sensitive nature of the issues involved in the present case, the Court distanced itself from the debate within Moldovan society concerning the ethnic identity of the main ethnic group. It took as a working basis the legislation of the Republic of Moldova and the official position of the Moldovan authorities when referring to Moldovans and Romanians.

As regards the requirement by the Moldovan authorities of proof of the ethnic origin of the applicant's parents, the Court did not dispute the right of a Government to require the existence of objective evidence of a claimed ethnicity. It was also ready to accept that it should be open to the authorities to refuse a claim to be officially recorded as belonging to a particular ethnicity where such a claim was based on purely subjective and unsubstantiated grounds.

However, Mr Ciubotaru appeared to have been confronted with a legal requirement making it impossible for him to support his claim. The relevant law and practice of recording ethnic identity had created insurmountable barriers before people who wished to have a different ethnic identity registered in respect of themselves as compared to that recorded in respect of their parents by the Soviet authorities in the past. According to the law, the applicant could have changed his ethnic identity only if he had shown that one of his parents had been recorded in the official records as being of Romanian ethnicity. However, during the Soviet times, the population of Moldova had been systematically registered as being of Moldovan ethnicity, with very few exceptions the criteria for which had been unclear. Therefore, by asking Mr Ciubotaru to show that his parents had been registered as being of Romanian ethnicity, the authorities had placed a disproportionate burden on him in view of the historical realities of the Republic of Moldova.

The Court further observed that Mr Ciubotaru's claim was based on more than his subjective perception of his own ethnicity. It was clear that he was able to provide objectively verifiable links with the Romanian ethnic group such as language, name, empathy and others. However, no such objective evidence could be relied upon under the Moldovan law in force.

The applicant had been unable to have his claim that he belonged to a certain ethnic group examined in the light of the objectively verifiable evidence presented in support of that claim. Having had regard to the circumstances of the case as a whole, the Court concluded that the existing procedure for Mr Ciubotaru to have his recorded ethnicity changed did not comply with Moldova's obligations under the Convention to safeguard his right to respect for his private life.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The respondent State should pay the applicant 1.500 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 3.500 for costs and expenses

**49. Eur. Court of HR, Uzun v. Germany, judgment of 2 September 2010, application no. 35623/05. Applicant complained about information obtained on him via GPS surveillance. The Court considered that adequate and effective safeguards against abuse had been in place.**

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**no. 35623/05  
02.09.2010**

Press release issued by the Registrar

## **UZUN v. GERMANY**

GPS surveillance of serious crime suspect was justified

### **Basic Facts**

In October 1995 the applicant and another man (S.) were placed under surveillance on the orders of an investigating judge because of their suspected involvement in bomb attacks that had been carried out by an extreme left-wing group to which they belonged. Realising that they were under surveillance, the two men sought to escape detection by destroying transmitters that had been installed in S.'s car and by avoiding use of the telephone. To counteract this, in December 1995 the Federal Public Prosecutor General authorised their surveillance by a Global-Positioning System device (GPS) which the authorities arranged to be fitted in S.'s car. The applicant and S. were arrested in February 1996 and subsequently found guilty of various bomb attacks between January and December 1995 on the basis of the evidence obtained through their surveillance, including GPS evidence linking the location of S.'s car to the scene of one of the attacks.

### **Law – Article 8**

The GPS surveillance in the applicant's case had been used systematically to collect and store data on his whereabouts and movements over a three-month period. That data had enabled the authorities to draw up a pattern of his movements, conduct additional investigations and collect further evidence that had been used at his trial. Accordingly, the GPS surveillance and the processing and use of the data thereby obtained had interfered with the applicant's right to respect for his private life.

As to whether the interference was in accordance with the law, the surveillance had a basis in a statutory provision that was accessible to the applicant. The questions whether that provision was sufficiently precise to satisfy the foreseeability requirement and whether it afforded adequate safeguards against abuse were not to be judged by reference to the rather strict standards that applied in the context of surveillance by telecommunications, as GPS surveillance of movements in public places was less intrusive.

The Court considered that adequate and effective safeguards against abuse had been in place. The measures had pursued the legitimate aims of protecting national security, public safety and the rights of the victims, and of preventing crime. It had also been proportionate: GPS surveillance had been ordered only after less intrusive methods of investigation had proved insufficient, had been carried out for a relatively short period (some three months), and had affected the applicant only when he was travelling in his accomplice's car. The applicant could not be said to have been subjected to total and comprehensive surveillance. Given that the investigation had concerned very serious crimes, the applicant's surveillance by GPS had thus been necessary in a democratic society.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8.

**50. Eur. Court of HR, Kennedy v. The United Kingdom, judgment of 18 May 2010, application no. 26839/05. The applicant complains under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and for correspondence), Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial) and Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) about the alleged interception of his communications, the unfair hearing before the IPT, and having been denied an effective remedy.**

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**no. 26839/05  
18.05.2010**

Press release issued by the Registrar

## **KENNEDY v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Secret surveillance measures did not interfere with the applicant's private life

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Malcolm Kennedy, is a British national who was born in 1946 and lives in London. When arrested for drunkenness in 1990 he spent the night in detention with an inmate who was found dead the next day. Mr Kennedy was subsequently found guilty of the man's murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. His case was controversial in the United Kingdom on account of missing and conflicting evidence.

Released from prison in 1996, Mr Kennedy started a removal business. He alleged that his business mail, telephone and email communications were being intercepted because of his high-profile case and his subsequent involvement in campaigning against miscarriages of justice.

The applicant complained to the Investigatory Powers Tribunal ("IPT") that his communications were being intercepted in "challengeable circumstances" amounting to a violation of his private life. Mr Kennedy sought the prohibition of any communication interception by the intelligence agencies and the "destruction of any product of such interception". He also requested specific directions to ensure the fairness of the proceedings before the IPT, including an oral hearing in public, and a mutual inspection of witness statements and evidence between the parties.

The IPT proceeded to examine the applicant's specific complaints in private, and in 2005 ruled that no determination had been made in his favour in respect of his complaints. This meant either that there had been no interception or that any interception which took place was lawful.

### **Law- Article 8**

The Court reiterated that, based on the principle of effective protection by the Convention's system, an individual might – under certain conditions to be determined in each case – claim to be the victim of a violation as a result of the mere existence of secret measures, even if they were not applied to him. This departure from the Court's general approach was to ensure that such measures, although secret, could be challenged and judicially supervised. In the applicant's case, the Court considered that it could not be excluded that secret surveillance measures were applied to him or that he was, at the material time, potentially at risk of being subjected to such measures. Accordingly, the Court concluded that he could complain of an interference with his Article 8 rights.

The Court considered it clear that the interference in question pursued the legitimate aims of protecting national security and the economic well-being of the country and preventing crime. In addition, it was

carried out on the basis of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (“RIPA”), supplemented by the Interception of Communications Code of Practice (“the Code”). The RIPA was available on the Internet, and hence accessible. It defined with sufficient precision the cases in which communications could be intercepted. While the offences allowing interception were not set out by name, the Court noted that States were not compelled to exhaustively list national security offences as those were by nature difficult to define in advance. Finally, as only communications within the United Kingdom were concerned in the present case – unlike in *Liberty and Others v. the UK*<sup>1</sup> – the domestic law described more fully the categories of persons who could be subject to an interception of their communications.

As regards the processing, communication and destruction of data, the Court noted that the overall duration of interception measures had to be left to the discretion of the domestic authorities, as long as adequate safeguards were put in place. In the present case the renewal or cancellation of interception warrants were under the systematic supervision of the Secretary of State. In addition, contrary to the practice for communications with other countries, the domestic law provided that warrants for internal communications related to one person or one set of premises only, thereby limiting the scope of the authorities’ discretion to intercept and listen to private communications. The law – more specifically the Code – also strictly limited the number of persons who had access to the intercept material, of which only a summary would be disclosed whenever sufficient. It also required the data to be destroyed as soon as they were no longer necessary, and detailed records of the warrants to be kept.

In terms of supervision of the RIPA regime, under the legislation a Commissioner was appointed who was independent from the executive and legislative authorities. His annual report to the Prime Minister was a public document and was laid before Parliament. The Court found his role in ensuring that the legal provisions were applied correctly very valuable, as well as his biannual review of a random selection of specific cases in which interception had been authorized. The Court further highlighted the extensive jurisdiction of Investigatory Powers Tribunal to examine any complaint of unlawful interception of communications. Unlike in many other countries, any person could apply to the IPT, which was an independent and impartial body. It had access to closed material and could require the Commissioner to order disclosure of all documents it considered relevant. When the IPT found in the applicant’s favour, it could quash any interception order, require destruction of intercepted material and order compensation. The publication of the IPT’s legal rulings further enhanced the level of scrutiny over secret surveillance activities in the United Kingdom.

The Court concluded that in the present case the relevant domestic provisions indicated with sufficient clarity the procedures concerning interception warrants as well as the processing, communicating and destruction of data collected. The Court further observed that there was no evidence of any significant shortcomings in the application and operation of the surveillance regime. Therefore, there had been no violation of Article 8.

### **Law – Article 6 § 1**

The Court reiterated that there might be restrictions on the right to fully adversarial proceedings where strictly necessary in the light of a strong countervailing public interest. Restrictions in the IPT proceedings were justified by confidentiality considerations and the nature of the issues justified the absence of an oral hearing. The Court further noted that according to Article 6 § 1 of the Convention, national security might justify the exclusion of the public from the proceedings. As to the policy of the authorities to “neither confirm nor deny”, the Court found it was sufficient that an applicant be informed in those terms.

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<sup>1</sup> *Liberty and Others v. the United Kingdom*, no. 58243/00

The Court emphasised the breadth and convenience of access to the IPT enjoyed by those complaining about interception within the United Kingdom. Bearing in mind the importance of secret surveillance to the fight against terrorism and serious crime, the Court considered that the restrictions on the applicant's rights in the context of the proceedings before the IPT were both necessary and proportionate and were not contrary to Article 6.

### **Law – Article 13**

Having regard to its conclusions in respect of Article 8 and Article 6 § 1, the Court considered that the IPT offered to the applicant an effective remedy insofar as his complaint was directed towards the alleged interception of his communications. In respect of the applicant's general complaint under Article 8, the Court reiterated that Article 13 did not go so far as to guarantee a remedy allowing a Contracting State's laws as such to be challenged before a national authority on the ground of being contrary to the Convention or to equivalent domestic legal norms. The Court therefore dismissed the applicant's complaint under this Article.

### **51. Eur. Court HR, Köpke v. Germany, judgment of 5 October 2010, application no 420/07. Case concerning video surveillance of supermarket cashier suspected of theft declared inadmissible**

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**no. 420/07**  
**05.10.2010**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **KÖPKE v. GERMANY**

Case concerning video surveillance of supermarket cashier suspected of theft declared inadmissible

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, a supermarket cashier, was dismissed without notice for theft, following a covert video surveillance operation carried out by her employer with the help of a private detective agency. She unsuccessfully challenged her dismissal before the labour courts. Her constitutional complaint was likewise dismissed.

### **Law – Article 8**

A video recording of the applicant's conduct at her workplace had been made without prior notice on the instruction of her employer. The images thereby obtained had been processed and examined by several fellow employees and used in the public proceedings before the labour courts. The applicant's "private life" within the meaning of Article 8 § 1 had therefore been concerned by these measures. The Court had to examine whether the State, in the context of its positive obligations under Article 8, had struck a fair balance between the applicant's right to respect for her private life and both her employer's interest in the protection of its property rights, guaranteed by Article 1 of Protocol No. 1, and the public interest in the proper administration of justice. At the relevant time, the conditions under which an employer could resort to the video surveillance of an employee in order to investigate a criminal offence the employee was suspected of having committed in the course of his or her work had not yet been laid down in statute law. However, the Federal Labour Court had developed in its case-law important safeguards against arbitrary interference with the employee's right to privacy. This case-law had been

applied by the domestic courts in the applicant's case. Moreover, covert video surveillance at the workplace following substantiated suspicions of theft did not affect a person's private life to such an extent as to require a State to set up a legislative framework in order to comply with its positive obligations under Article 8. As noted by the German courts, the video surveillance of the applicant had only been carried out after losses had been detected during stocktaking and irregularities discovered in the accounts of the department where she worked, raising an arguable suspicion of theft committed by the applicant and another employee, who were the only employees to have been targeted by the surveillance measure. The measure had been limited in time (two weeks) and had only covered the area surrounding the cash desk and accessible to the public. The visual data obtained had been processed by a limited number of persons working for the detective agency and by staff members of the employer. They had been used only in connection with the termination of her employment and the proceedings before the labour courts. The interference with the applicant's private life had thus been restricted to what had been necessary to achieve the aims pursued by the video surveillance. The domestic courts had further considered that the employer's interest in the protection of its property rights could only be effectively safeguarded by collecting evidence in order to prove the applicant's criminal conduct in the court proceedings. This had also served the public interest in the proper administration of justice. Furthermore, the covert video surveillance of the applicant had served to clear from suspicion other employees. Moreover, there had not been any other equally effective means to protect the employer's property rights which would have interfered to a lesser extent with the applicant's right to respect for her private life.

The stocktaking could not clearly link the losses discovered to a particular employee. Surveillance by superiors or colleagues or open video surveillance did not have the same prospects of success in discovering a covert theft. In sum, there was nothing to indicate that the domestic authorities had failed to strike a fair balance, within their margin of appreciation, between the applicant's right to respect for her private life and both her employer's interest in the protection of its property rights and the public interest in the proper administration of justice. However, the balance struck between the interests at issue by the domestic authorities did not appear to be the only possible way for them to comply with their obligations under the Convention. The competing interests concerned might well be given a different weight in the future, having regard to the extent to which intrusions into private life were made possible by new, more sophisticated technologies.

**Conclusion:** inadmissible (manifestly-ill-founded).

**52. Eur. Court of HR, Mikolajová v. Slovakia, judgment of 18 January 2011, application no 4479/03. Disclosure of police decision stating that the applicant had committed an offence, even though no criminal proceedings were ever brought**

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**no. 4479/03**  
**18.01.2011**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**MIKOLAJOVÁ v. SLOVAKIA**

The disclosure of a police decision stating that the applicant had committed an offence although no criminal proceeding was ever conducted violated the Convention

**Basic Facts**

In 2000 the applicant's husband filed a criminal complaint with the police alleging that the applicant had beaten and wounded him. Several days later, the police dropped the case because the applicant's husband did not agree to criminal proceedings being brought against her. In their decision, which was never served on the applicant, the police stated that their investigation had established that the applicant had committed the criminal offence of inflicting bodily injury. A year and a half later, relying on the police decision, an insurance company wrote to the applicant requesting her to reimburse the costs of her husband's medical treatment. The applicant protested to the police about their decision and filed a constitutional complaint alleging the violation of her rights, but to no avail.

**Law – Article 8**

Given the gravity of the conclusion contained in the police decision, namely that the applicant was guilty of a violent criminal offence, coupled with its disclosure to the insurance company, the Court considered that there had been an interference with the applicant's rights protected by Article 8. The police decision had been formulated as a statement of fact thus indicating that the police considered the applicant guilty of the alleged offence. Even though she had never been charged with a criminal offence, the applicant was nonetheless placed on record as a criminal offender possibly for an indefinite period, which must have caused damage to her reputation. Moreover, the Court could not but note the lack of any procedural safeguards in that the applicant had no available recourse to obtain a subsequent retraction or clarification of the impugned police decision. The domestic authorities had thus failed to strike a fair balance between the applicant's Article 8 rights and any interests relied on by the Government to justify the terms of the police decision and its disclosure to a third party.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

EUR 1,500 in respect of non-pecuniary damage

**53. Eur. Court of HR, *Wasmuth v. Germany*, judgment of 17 February 2011, application no. 12884/03. Requirement to indicate on wage-tax card possible membership of a Church or religious society entitled to levy church tax.**

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**no. 12884/03  
17.02.2011**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**WASMUTH v. GERMANY**

Taxpayer's obligation to disclose non-affiliation with church to employer did not violate his right to freedom of religion

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Johannes Wasmuth, is a German national who was born in 1956 and lives in Munich. He is a lawyer in private practice and is also employed as a lector in a publishing house. On his wage-tax cards of the last few years, the entry "--" could be found in the field "Church tax deducted", informing his employer that he did not have to deduct any church tax for Mr Wasmuth.

After having unsuccessfully requested the local authorities to issue him a wage-tax card without any information concerning his religious affiliation for the fiscal year of 1997 and 1998 and having unsuccessfully brought proceedings before the German courts in that matter, Mr Wasmuth again unsuccessfully made such a request concerning his tax card to be issued for 2002. He subsequently brought proceedings before the finance court, arguing that the information on the tax card violated his right not to indicate his religious convictions, that there was no legal basis for the public treasury to levy church tax and that it could not be expected of him as a homosexual to participate in a tax collection system which benefited social groups – the churches - whose stated goal was to question and to debase an integral aspect of his personality.

The finance court rejected Mr Wasmuth's claim in February 2002, holding that the local fiscal authorities were entitled under the relevant provisions of Bavarian law and German federal law to obtain information about employees' affiliation or non-affiliation with a religious society authorised to levy church tax and to submit that information to the employer in charge of deducting the tax. The entry "--" served to avoid him having to unduly pay church tax. In the court's view, the interference with Mr Wasmuth's fundamental rights was minimal and he had to accept it in the interest of the proper collection of church tax. The court further pointed out that the views of the Catholic and Protestant churches in Germany did not interfere with Mr Wasmuth's personality rights and that their position on homosexual marriage was shared by many other groups. The churches' position did not give Mr Wasmuth the right to refuse to participate in the church tax system. The decision was upheld by the Federal Court of Finance. By decision of 30 September 2002 (1 BvR 1744/02), the Federal Constitutional Court rejected Mr Wasmuth's constitutional complaint, referring to its decision of 25 May 2001 (1 BvR 2253/00) not to accept his earlier complaint, in which it had found that the disclosure of a taxpayer's non-affiliation with a religious society authorised to levy religious tax did not place an unacceptable burden on him.

**Law – Article 9**

In accordance with its recent case-law, the Court found that the obligation to inform the authorities of his non-affiliation with churches or religious societies authorised to levy religious tax constituted an interference with Mr Wasmuth's right not to indicate his religious convictions. The Court was satisfied

that that obligation had a basis in German law, as the domestic courts had consistently held. The interference had further served the legitimate aim of ensuring the right of churches and religious societies to levy religious tax. It remained to be established whether the interference had been proportionate to that aim.

The German courts had been called on to balance the negative aspect of Mr Wasmuth's right to freedom of religion against the right of churches and religious societies to levy religious tax as guaranteed by the constitution. The Court agreed with the German Government that the reference on the tax card at issue was only of limited informative value as regards his religious or philosophic conviction, as it simply indicated to the fiscal authorities that he did not belong to one of the six churches or religious societies which were authorised to levy religious tax in Bavaria and exercised that right in practice. The tax card was not in principle used in public; it did not serve any purpose outside the relation between the taxpayer and his employer or the tax authorities. In contrast to other cases in which the Court had found a violation of Article 9, the authorities had not asked Mr Wasmuth to explain why he did not belong to one of the religious societies authorised to levy religious tax and did not verify what his religious or philosophic conviction was. The Court therefore found that the obligation imposed on Mr Wasmuth was, in the circumstances of his case, not disproportionate to the aims pursued.

As regards Mr Wasmuth's complaint that by providing the required information he contributed to the functioning of the church tax system and thereby indirectly supported the churches whose positions he rejected, the Court took note of the German courts' arguments that his participation in the system was minimal and that it served precisely to avoid him having to unduly pay church tax. The Court further had regard to the fact that there was no European standard in the area of funding of churches and religious groups, a question which was closely linked to each country's history and tradition.

In view of those considerations the Court concluded that there had been no violation of Article 9.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court reiterated that the collection, storage and transfer of data linked to an individual's private life fell within the remit of Article 8 § 1. The obligation imposed on Mr Wasmuth thus constituted an interference with his rights under that Article. However, in the light of its findings under Article 9 the Court held that that interference had been in accordance with the law and that it had been proportionate to a legitimate aim pursued for the purpose of Article 8 § 2. There had accordingly been no violation of Article 8.

#### **Article 14**

As regards Mr Wasmuth's complaint under Article 14 that he had been discriminated against as a homosexual, the Court observed that he had not raised that point before the German Federal Constitutional Court. That part of his complaint therefore had to be rejected as inadmissible for non-exhaustion of domestic remedies.

**54. Eur. Court of HR, Sipoş v. Romania, judgment of 3 May 2011, application no. 26125/04. Journalist's right to respect for reputation should have prevailed over TV channel's freedom of expression.**

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**no. 26125/04**  
**03.05.2011**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**SIPOŞ v. ROMANIA**

Journalist's right to respect for reputation should have prevailed over TV channel's freedom of expression

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Maria Sipoş, is a Romanian national who was born in 1949 and lives in Bucharest. She is a journalist, writer and translator. In 2002, when she was making and presenting a television program for the Romanian Television Company (SRTV) called "Event", which was broadcast on the national State channel România 1, she was replaced by the channel's management without explanation. Not having received any response to her protest, she made statements to the press alluding to the restoration of censorship in State television.

On 20 March 2003 Ms Sipoş brought criminal proceedings before the Bucharest District Court against the channel's director and the coordinator of the SRTV's press office, accusing both of insults and defamation. She joined the proceedings as a civil party and sought compensation for the non-pecuniary damage that she alleged had been caused to her. On 26 June 2003 the District Court acquitted the defendants on the ground that they had not acted with the intention of insulting or defaming Ms Sipoş but to express an official position of the SRTV concerning her accusations of censorship. Her compensation claim was dismissed. Ms Sipoş appealed against that decision. In a judgment of 3 December 2003 Bucharest County Court acknowledged that the press release contained defamatory assertions about Ms Sipoş. However, having regard to the fact that the defendants had not intended to insult or defame her, and in view of their good faith, it dismissed Ms Sipoş' appeal in a final judgment.

**Law – Article 8**

The Court first reiterated that Article 8 did not merely compel the State to abstain from arbitrary interference with the right to respect for private life. The State also had "positive obligations" that might involve the adoption of measures designed to secure respect for private life even in the sphere of the relations between individuals. To be precise, in the case of Ms Sipoş, the Court had to determine whether Romania had struck a fair balance between, on the one hand, the protection of her right to her reputation and to respect for her private life, and on the other, the freedom of expression (Article 10) of those who had issued the impugned press release.

For that purpose it examined the content of the press release.

It first noted that, in its final judgment, Bucharest County Court had admitted that the offending press release contained defamatory remarks about Ms Sipoş.

It further noted that the press release, which had been drafted by a specialised department of Romanian State television and could not therefore be compared to comments made spontaneously, was not

confined to a factual statement or explanations. It also contained assertions about political manipulation to which Ms Sipoş had allegedly been subjected, and about her emotional state, which was described in particular as being marked by family problems and as creating difficulties in her relations at work.

The Court took the view in this connection that the assertions presenting Ms Sipoş as a victim of political manipulation were devoid of any proven factual basis, since there was no indication that she had acted under the influence of any particular vested interest. As regards the remarks on her emotional state, the Court noted that they were based on elements of her private life whose disclosure did not seem necessary. As to the assessment about Ms Sipoş' discernment, it could not be regarded as providing an indispensable contribution to the position of the SRTV, as expressed through the press release, since it was based on elements of the applicant's private life known to the SRTV's management.

In conclusion, the assertions complained of by Ms Sipoş had overstepped the acceptable limit and the Romanian courts had not struck a fair balance between the protection of her right to her reputation and the freedom of expression protected by Article 10.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that Romania was to pay the applicant 3,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

#### **Separate Opinion**

Judge Myjer expressed a dissenting opinion, which is annexed to the judgment.

**55. Eur. Court of HR, Mosley v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 10 May 2011, application no. 48009/08. The European Convention on Human Rights does not require media to give prior notice of intended publications to those who feature in them.**

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**no. 48009/08**  
**10.05.2011**

Press release issued by the Registrar

#### **MOSLEY v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The European Convention on Human Rights does not require media to give prior notice of intended publications to those who feature in them

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Max Rufus Mosley, is a British national who was born in 1940 and lives in Monaco. He is the former president of the International Automobile Federation, a nonprofit association that represents the interests of motoring organisations and car users worldwide and is also the governing body for Formula One

In March 2008, the Sunday newspaper *News of the World* published on its front page an article entitled "F1 boss has sick Nazi orgy with 5 hookers". Several pages inside the newspaper were also devoted to

the story which included still photographs taken from video footage secretly recorded by one of the participants in the sexual activities.

An edited extract of the video, in addition to still images, were also published on the newspaper's website and reproduced elsewhere on the internet.

On 4 April 2008, Mr Mosley brought legal proceedings against the newspaper claiming damages for breach of confidence and invasion of privacy. In addition, he sought an injunction to restrain the *News of the World* from making available on its website the edited video footage.

On 9 April 2008, the High Court refused to grant the injunction because the material was no longer private as it had been published extensively in print and on the Internet. In subsequent privacy proceedings before the High Court, the court found that the images did not carry any Nazi connotations. Consequently, there was no public interest and thus no justification for publishing that article and accompanying images, which had breached Mr Mosley's right to privacy. The court ruled that *News of the World* had to pay to Mr Mosley 60,000 GBP in damages.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that the UK courts had found no Nazi element in Mr Mosley's sexual activities and had therefore concluded that there had been no public interest in, and therefore justification for, the publication of the articles and images. In addition, the newspaper had not appealed against the judgment. The Court therefore considered that the publications in question had resulted in a flagrant and unjustified invasion of Mr Mosley's private life. Given that Mr Mosley had achieved a finding in his favour before the domestic court, the Court's own assessment concerned the balancing act to be conducted between the right to privacy and the right to freedom of expression not in the circumstances of the applicant's particular case but in relation to the UK legal system.

It was clear that the UK authorities had been obliged under the Convention not only to refrain from interfering with Mr Mosley's private life, but also to take measures to ensure his effective enjoyment of that right. The question which remained to be answered was whether a legally binding pre-notification rule was required.

The Court observed that it had implicitly accepted in its earlier case law that damages obtained following a defamatory publication provided an adequate remedy for right-to private- life breaches arising out of newspaper publications of private information.

It then recalled that States enjoyed a certain margin of appreciation in respect of the measures they put in place to protect people's right to private life. Notwithstanding the potential merits of Mr Mosley's individual case, given that a pre-notification requirement would inevitably affect political reporting and serious journalism, in addition to the sensationalist reporting at issue in Mr Mosley's case, the Court stressed that any restriction on journalism required careful scrutiny.

In the United Kingdom, the right to private life had been protected with a number of measures: there was a system of self-regulation of the press; people could claim damages in civil court proceedings; and, if individuals were aware of an intended publication touching upon their private life, they could seek an interim injunction preventing publication of the material. In addition, in the context of private life and freedom of expression, a parliamentary inquiry on privacy issues had been recently held in the UK with the participation of various interested parties, including Mr Mosley himself, and the ensuing report had rejected the need for a pre-notification requirement.

The Court further noted that Mr Mosley had not referred to a single jurisdiction in which a pre-notification requirement as such existed, nor had he indicated any international legal texts requiring States to adopt

such a requirement. Last and not least, the current UK system fully corresponded to the resolutions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on media and privacy.

As to the clarity of any pre-notification requirement, the Court was of the view that the concept of “private life” was sufficiently well understood for newspapers and reporters to be able to identify when a publication could infringe the right to respect for private life. It further considered that a satisfactory definition of those subject to the obligation could be found. However, any pre-notification obligation would have to allow for an exception if public interest was at stake. Thus, a newspaper could opt not to notify an individual if it believed that it could subsequently defend its decision on the basis of the public interest in the information published.

The Court observed in that regard that a narrowly defined public interest exception would increase the chilling effect of any pre-notification duty. In Mr Mosley’s case, given that the *News of the World* had believed that the sexual activities they were disclosing had had Nazi overtones, hence were of public interest, they could have chosen not to notify Mr Mosley, even if a legal pre-notification requirement had been in place. Alternatively, a newspaper could choose, in any future case to which a pre-notification requirement was applied, to run the same risk and decline to notify, preferring instead to pay a subsequent fine. The Court emphasised that any pre-notification requirement would only be as strong as the sanctions imposed for failing to observe it; however, particular care had to be taken when examining constraints which might operate as a form of censorship prior to publication. Although punitive fines and criminal sanctions could be effective in encouraging pre-notification, that would have a chilling effect on journalism, even political and investigative reporting, both of which attracted a high level of protection under the Convention. That ran the risk of being incompatible with the Convention requirements of freedom of expression.

The Court concluded by recognising that the private lives of those in the public eye had become a highly lucrative commodity for certain sectors of the media. The publication of news about such people contributed to the range of information available to the public. Although the dissemination of that information was generally for the purposes of entertainment rather than education, it undoubtedly benefitted from the protection of Article 10. The Article 10 protection afforded to publications might cede to the requirements of Article 8 where the information was of a private and intimate nature and there was no public interest in its dissemination.

However, looking beyond the facts of Mr Mosley’s case, and having regard to the chilling effect to which a pre-notification requirement risked giving rise, to the doubts about its effectiveness and to the wide margin of appreciation afforded to the UK in that area, the Court concluded that Article 8 did not require a legally binding pre-notification requirement.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8

**56. Eur. Court of HR, *Shimovolos v. Russia*, judgment of 21 June 2011, application no. 30194/09. Applicant complained about police listing and surveillance on his account of membership in a human rights organisation.**

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**no. 30194/09  
21.06.2011**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **SHIMOVOLOS v. RUSSIA**

Police listing and surveillance on account of membership in a human rights organisation

#### **Basic Facts**

In May 2007 a European Union-Russia Summit was scheduled to take place in Samara (Russia). At about the same time the applicant's name was registered as a human-rights activist in the so-called "surveillance database". The local authorities were informed that protests were planned during the summit and that it was necessary to stop all members of organisations planning such protests in order to prevent unlawful and extremist acts. They were also informed that the applicant was coming to Samara by train several days before the summit and that he might be carrying extremist literature. When the applicant arrived in Samara, he was stopped by the police and escorted to the police station at around 12.15 p.m. under the threat of force. At the police station the officers drew up an attendance report using a standard template entitled "Attendance report in respect of a person who has committed an administrative offence". However, they crossed out the phrase "who has committed an administrative offence". The applicant was released some 45 minutes later. The police officer who had escorted the applicant to the police station later stated that he had done so in order to prevent him from committing administrative and criminal offences.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The applicant's name was registered in the "surveillance database", which collected information about his movements, by train or air, within Russia and therefore amounted to an interference with his private life. The creation and maintenance of the database and the procedure for its operation were governed by a ministerial order which had never been published or otherwise made accessible to the public. Consequently, the Court found that the domestic law did not indicate with sufficient clarity the scope and manner of exercise of the discretion conferred on the domestic authorities to collect and store information on individuals' private lives in the database. In particular, it did not set out in a form accessible to the public any indication of the minimum safeguards against abuse.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**57. Eur. Court of HR, Avram and Others v. Moldova, judgment of 05 July 2011, application no. 41588/05. Five women broadcast on national television in a sauna romp with police officers should have received higher compensation.**

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**no 41588/05**

**5.7.11**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**AVRAM AND OTHERS v. MOLDOVA**

Five women broadcast on national television in a sauna romp with police officers should have received higher compensation

**Basic Facts**

The applicants, Ala Avram, Elena Vrabie, Eugenia Buzu, Ana Moraru and Alina Frumusachi, are five Moldovan nationals who were born in 1979, 1976, 1979, 1979 and 1979 respectively and live in Chişinău.

Friends, the five women complained about the broadcasting on national television on 10 May 2003 of intimate video footage of them in a sauna with five men, four of whom were police officers. At the time, three of the applicants were journalists, the first two for the investigative newspaper *Accente*, one was a French teacher and the other was a librarian. The women claim that they first had contact with the police officers in October 2002 when the editor in chief of *Accente* was arrested on charges of corruption and that, from that point on, the officers provided them with material for their articles. One of the applicants had even become romantically involved with one of the officers.

The footage was used in a programme about corruption in journalism, and notably in the newspaper *Accente*. It showed the applicants, apparently intoxicated, in a sauna in their underwear, with two of them kissing and touching one of the men, and one of them performing an erotic dance. The men in the video had their faces blacked out. It also showed a document concerning Ms Avram's collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The applicants alleged in particular that the video had been secretly filmed by the police officers and used to try to blackmail them into not publishing an article on illegalities at the Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs. The officers had given the video to the national television service when the first two applicants had had the article published in their newspaper.

On 17 and 20 May 2003 Ms Avram lodged a criminal complaint alleging blackmail and abuse of power on the part of the police. Both the applicants and the police officers were questioned. The officers denied any implication in the secret filming or blackmail, or indeed ever having had a relationship with the five applicants. In June 2004 the prosecuting authorities dismissed the complaint on the ground that dissemination of defamatory information was not an offence under Moldovan law. That decision was upheld on extraordinary appeal in October 2005.

In the meantime, the applicants also brought civil proceedings against the Ministry of Internal Affairs (for arranging the secret filming and giving documents of a private nature to national television) and National Television (for then broadcasting the images of a private nature). They requested compensation for a breach of their right to respect for their private and family life under Article 8 of the European Convention. In August 2008 the Supreme Court of Justice gave a final ruling in which it dismissed the complaint

against the Ministry of Internal Affairs concerning the secret filming on account of lack of evidence. It held, however, that the Ministry was responsible for handing documents of a private nature concerning Ms Avram over to the National Television Service and that National Television was then responsible for the broadcasting of the sauna scene, in breach of Article 8 of the Convention.

The Supreme Court ordered the National Television Service to pay each applicant 3,600 Moldovan lei (MDL – the equivalent of 214 euros (EUR)), the Ministry of Internal Affairs a further MDL 3,600 to Ms Avram and a guest of the broadcasted programme MDL 1,800 (the equivalent of EUR 107) to Ms Vrabie, the maximum amounts allowed under Article 7/1 of the Moldovan old Civil Code by way of compensation for damage to a person's honour or dignity.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that the interference with the applicant's right to privacy was not in dispute. It had been acknowledged by the national courts and the applicants awarded compensation. The principal issue then was whether the ensuing awards made had been proportionate to the damage the applicants had sustained and whether the Supreme Court had fulfilled its Convention obligations under Article 8 when applying domestic law, which limited the amount of compensation payable to victims of defamation.

The Court was not persuaded that the Supreme Court had not any other possibility – other than under Article 7/1 of the old Civil Code – to decide on compensation. On the contrary, there were several examples of cases where the Supreme Court had relied on the European Court's practice to compensate breaches of Convention rights and damages were given which were comparable to those awarded by this Court.

In any case, the amounts awarded had been too low to be proportionate to such a serious interference with the applicants' right to respect for their private lives as a broadcast of intimate video footage of them on national television. Indeed, the Court saw no reason to doubt what a dramatic affect that had to have had on their private, family and social lives. The applicants could therefore still claim the status of victim and, accordingly, held that there had been a violation of Article 8.

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that Moldova was to pay Ms Avram EUR 5,000, Ms Vrabie EUR 6,000 and Ms Buzu, Ms Moraru and Ms Frumusachi EUR 4,000, each, in respect of non-pecuniary damage. EUR 1,500 was awarded for costs and expenses.

### **Separate Opinion**

Judge Poalelungi expressed a concurring opinion which is annexed to the judgment.

**58. Eur. Court of HR, *Khelili v. Switzerland*, judgment of 18 October 2011, application no. 16188/07. A French woman classified as a “prostitute” for fifteen years in Geneva police database violated her right to respect for private life.**

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**no. 16188/07  
18.10.2011**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **KHELILI v. SWITZERLAND**

A French woman classified as a “prostitute” for fifteen years in Geneva police database violated her right to respect for private life

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Sabrina Khelili, is a French national who was born in 1959 and lives in Saint Priest (France).

During a police check in Geneva in 1993, the police found Ms Khelili to be carrying calling cards which read: “Nice, pretty woman, late thirties, would like to meet a man to have a drink together or go out from time to time. Tel. no. ...” Following this discovery Ms Khelili alleged that the Geneva police entered her name in their records as a prostitute, despite her insistence that she had never been one. The police attested that they were basing their work on the cantonal law on data protection which authorised the police to manage records that might contain personal data for as long as was necessary to enable them to carry out their duties (namely to punish offences and prevent crimes and misdemeanours). In November 1993, as a preventive measure, the Federal Aliens Office issued a two-year ban on her residing in Switzerland.

In 2001 two criminal complaints of threatening and insulting behaviour were lodged against Ms Khelili. In 2003 she found out from a letter issued by the Geneva police that the word “prostitute” still figured in the police files. In May 2005 Ms Khelili was given a suspended sentence for 20 days for two additional complaints of insulting and abusive use of telecommunication installations lodged against her in 2002 and 2003.

In July 2005 the chief of police certified that the word describing her profession in the police database had been replaced with “dressmaker”. After having found out, in 2006, during a telephone conversation that the word “prostitute” still figured in the police computer files, Ms Khelili requested that the information relating to prostitution be deleted from the police records. In 2006 the chief of police confirmed in a letter that that had been done. Ms Khelili also requested that data concerning criminal complaints of threatening and insulting behaviour lodged against her in 2001, which also included the word “prostitute”, be deleted. That request was refused on the ground that such information had to be kept as a preventive measure, given her previous infringements. Ms Khelili argued that maintaining that word in her files would make her day-to-day life more problematic, because such information would be communicated to her potential future employers.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court agreed that in today’s case, the interference with Ms Khelili’s rights had a legal basis in domestic law. The Court also recognised that Ms Khelili’s data was retained for the purpose of the prevention of disorder or crime and the protection of the rights of others.

However, the Court noted that the word “prostitute” as a profession had been deleted from the police database but that that word had not been corrected in connection with criminal proceedings relating to the complaints lodged against Ms Khelili. The Court reiterated that the word at issue could damage Ms Khelili’s reputation and make her day-to-day life more problematic, given that the data contained in the police records might be transferred to the authorities. That was all the more significant because personal data was currently subject to automatic processing, thus considerably facilitating access to and the distribution of such data. Ms Khelili therefore had a considerable interest in having the word “prostitute” removed from the police records.

The Court took account, firstly, of the fact that the allegation of unlawful prostitution appeared to be very vague and general and that the link between Ms Khelili’s conviction for threatening and insulting behaviour and retention of the word “prostitute” was not sufficiently close. It further noted the contradictory behaviour of the authorities; despite confirmation from the police that the word “prostitute” had been corrected; Ms Khelili learned that that word had been retained on the police computer records. Consequently, the Court concluded that the storage in the police records of allegedly false data concerning her private life had breached Ms Khelili’s right to respect for her private life and considered that the retention of the word “prostitute” for years was neither justified nor necessary in a democratic society.

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court ordered Switzerland to pay Ms Khelili 15,000 euros (EUR) in respect of nonpecuniary damage and rejected the application in respect of costs and expenses.

**59. Eur. Court of HR, Axel Springer AG v. Germany, judgment of 7 February 2012, application no. 39954/08. Media coverage of celebrities’ private lives: acceptable if in the general interest and if in reasonable balance with the right to respect for private life.**

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**no. 39954/08**  
**07.02.2012**

Press release issued by the Registrar

#### **AXEL SPRINGER AG v. GERMANY**

The injunction prohibiting any further publication of newspaper articles about a celebrity violated Article 10

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant company, Axel Springer AG (“Springer”), is registered in Germany. It is the publisher of the *Bild*, a national daily newspaper with a large circulation.

In September 2004, the *Bild* published a front-page article about X, a well-known television actor, being arrested in a tent at the Munich beer festival for possession of cocaine. The article was supplemented by a more detailed article on another page and was illustrated by three pictures of X. It mentioned that X, who had played the role of a police superintendent in a popular TV series since 1998, had previously been given a suspended prison sentence for possession of drugs in July 2000. The newspaper published a second article in July 2005, which reported on X being convicted and fined for illegal possession of drugs after he had made a full confession. Immediately after the first article appeared, X brought injunction proceedings against Springer with the Hamburg Regional Court, which granted his request and prohibited any further publication of the article and the photos. The prohibition to publish

the article was eventually upheld by the court of appeal in June 2005, the judgment concerning the photos was not challenged by Springer.

In November 2005, Hamburg Regional Court prohibited any further publication of almost the entire article, on pain of penalty for non-compliance, and ordered Springer to pay an agreed penalty. The court held in particular that the right to protection of X's personality rights prevailed over the public's interest in being informed, even if the truth of the facts related by the daily had not been disputed. The case had not concerned a serious offence and there was no particular public interest in knowing about X's offence. The judgment was upheld by the Hamburg Court of Appeal and, in December 2006, by the Federal Court of Justice.

In another set of proceedings concerning the second article, about X's conviction, the Hamburg Regional Court granted his application on essentially the same grounds as those set out in its judgment on the first article. The judgment was upheld by the Hamburg Court of Appeal and, in June 2007, by the Federal Court of Justice.

In March 2008, the Federal Constitutional Court declined to consider constitutional appeals lodged by the applicant company against the decisions.

## **Law – Article 10**

It was undisputed between the parties that the German courts' decisions had constituted an interference with Springer's right to freedom of expression under Article 10. It was further common ground that the interference was prescribed by German law and that it had pursued a legitimate aim, namely the protection of the reputation of others.

As regards the question whether the interference had been necessary in a democratic society, the Court noted that the articles in question, about the arrest and conviction of the actor, concerned public judicial facts, of which the public had an interest in being informed. It was in principle for the national courts to assess how well known a person was, especially where that person, as the actor concerned, was mainly known at national level. The court of appeal had found that, having played the role of a police superintendent over a long period of time, the actor was well known and very popular. The Court thus considered that he was sufficiently well known to qualify as a public figure, which reinforced the public's interest in being informed of his arrest and the proceedings against him.

While the Court could broadly agree with the German courts' assessment that Springer's interest in publishing the articles was solely due precisely to the fact that it was a well-known actor who had committed an offence – which would not have been reported on if committed by a person unknown to the public – it underlined that the actor had been arrested in public at the Munich beer festival. The actor's expectation that his private life would be effectively protected had furthermore been reduced by the fact that he had previously revealed details about his private life in a number of interviews.

According to a statement by one of the journalists involved, the truth of which had not been contested by the German Government, the information published in the *Bild* in September 2004 about the actor's arrest had been obtained from the police and the Munich public prosecutor's office. It therefore had a sufficient factual basis, and the truth of the information related in both articles was not in dispute between the parties.

Nothing suggested that Springer had not undertaken a balancing exercise between its interest in publishing the information and the actor's right to respect for his private life. Given that Springer had obtained confirmation of the information conveyed by the prosecuting authorities, it did not have sufficiently strong grounds for believing that it should preserve the actor's anonymity. It could therefore not be said to have acted in bad faith. In that context, the Court also noted that all the information

revealed by Springer on the day on which the first article appeared was confirmed by the prosecutor to other magazines and to television channels.

The Court noted, moreover, that the articles had not revealed details about the actor's private life, but had mainly concerned the circumstances of his arrest and the outcome of the criminal proceedings against him. They contained no disparaging expression or unsubstantiated allegation, and the Government had not shown that the publication of the articles had resulted in serious consequences for the actor. While the sanctions imposed on Springer had been lenient, they were capable of having a chilling effect on the company. The Court concluded that the restrictions imposed on the company had not been reasonably proportionate to the legitimate aim of protecting the actor's private life. There had accordingly been a violation of Article 10.

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that Germany was to pay Axel Springer AG 17,734.28 euros (EUR) in respect of pecuniary damage and EUR 32,522.80 in respect of costs and expenses.

### **Separate Opinions**

In the case *Axel Springer AG*, Judge López Guerra expressed a dissenting opinion, joined by Judges Jungwiert, Jaeger, Villiger and Poalelungi, which is annexed to the judgment.

**60. Eur. Court of HR, *Von Hannover v. Germany* (no. 2), judgment of 7 February 2012, applications nos. 40660/08 and 60641/08, Applicant complained about refusal of domestic courts to issue injunction restraining further publication of a photograph of a famous couple taken without their knowledge**

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**no.s 40660/08 and 60641/08  
07.02.2012**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **VON HANNOVER v. GERMANY (No. 2)**

Refusal of domestic courts to issue injunction restraining further publication of a photograph of a famous couple taken without their knowledge

### **Basic Facts**

The applicants were Princess Caroline von Hannover, daughter of the late Prince Rainier III of Monaco, and her husband Prince Ernst August von Hannover. Since the early 1990s Princess Caroline had sought, often through the courts, to prevent the publication of photographs of her private life in the press. Two series of photographs, published in German magazines in 1993 and 1997, had been the subject of litigation in the German courts that had led to leading judgments of the Federal Court of Justice in 1995 and of the Federal Constitutional Court in 1999 dismissing her claims. Those proceedings were the subject of the European Court's judgment in *Von Hannover v. Germany* (the first *Von Hannover* judgment, no. 59320/00, 24 June 2004), in which the Court found a violation of Princess Caroline's right to respect for her private life under Article 8.

Following that judgment, the applicants brought further proceedings in the domestic courts for an injunction restraining further publication of three photographs which had been taken without their consent during skiing holidays between 2002 and 2004 and had already appeared in two German magazines. The Federal Court of Justice granted an injunction in respect of two of the photographs, which it considered did not contribute to a debate of general interest. However, it refused an injunction in respect of the third photograph, which showed the applicants taking a walk during a skiing holiday in St Moritz and was accompanied by an article reporting on, among other issues, Prince Rainier's poor health. That decision was upheld by the Federal Constitutional Court, which found that the Federal Court of Justice had had valid grounds for considering that the reigning prince's poor health was a subject of general interest and that the press had been entitled to report on the manner in which his children reconciled their obligations of family solidarity with the legitimate needs of their private life, among which was the desire to go on holiday. The Federal Court of Justice's conclusion that the photograph had a sufficiently close link with the event described in the article was constitutionally unobjectionable.

### **Law – Article 8**

In response to the applicants' submission that the domestic courts had not taken sufficient account of the Court's decision in the first *Von Hannover* judgment, the Court observed that it was not its task to examine whether Germany had satisfied its obligations under Article 46 of the Convention regarding execution of that judgment: that was the responsibility of the Committee of Ministers. The present applications thus concerned only the new proceedings. Likewise, it was not the Court's task to review the relevant domestic law and practice in abstracto following the changes the Federal Court of Justice had made to its earlier case-law in the wake of the first *Von Hannover* judgment; instead its role was to determine whether the manner in which the law and practice had been applied to the applicants had infringed Article 8.

In applying its new approach, the Federal Court of Justice had granted an injunction in respect of two of the photographs on the grounds that neither they, nor the articles accompanying them, contributed to a debate of general interest. As regards the third photograph, however, it had found that Prince Rainier's illness and the conduct of the members of his family at the time qualified as an event of contemporary society on which the magazines were entitled to report and to include the photograph to support and illustrate the information being conveyed. The Court found that the domestic courts' characterisation of Prince Rainier's illness as an event of contemporary society could not be considered unreasonable and it was able to accept that the photograph, considered in the light of the article, did at least to some degree contribute to a debate of general interest (in that connection, it noted that the injunctions restraining publication of the other two photographs, which showed the applicants in similar circumstances, had been granted precisely because they were being published purely for entertainment purposes). Furthermore, irrespective of the question to what extent Princess Caroline assumed official functions on behalf of the Principality of Monaco, it could not be claimed that the applicants, who were undeniably very well known, were ordinary private individuals. They had to be regarded as public figures. As to the circumstances in which the photographs had been taken, this had been taken into account by the domestic courts, which found that the applicants had not adduced any evidence to show that the photographs had been taken surreptitiously, in secret or in otherwise unfavourable conditions.

In conclusion, the domestic courts had carefully balanced the publishing companies' right to freedom of expression against the applicants' right to respect for their private life. In so doing, they had attached fundamental importance to the question whether the photographs, considered in the light of the accompanying articles, had contributed to a debate of general interest and had also examined the circumstances in which they had been taken. The Federal Court of Justice had changed its approach following the first *Von Hannover* judgment and the Federal Constitutional Court, for its part, had not only confirmed that approach, but had also undertaken a detailed analysis of the Court's case-law in response to the applicants' complaints that the Federal Court of Justice had disregarded it. In those circumstances, and regard being had to the margin of appreciation enjoyed by the national courts when balancing

competing interests, the domestic courts had not failed to comply with their positive obligations under Article 8.

**Conclusion:** no violation.

**61. *Eur. Court of HR, E.S. v. Sweden*, judgment of 21 June 2012, application no. 5786/08. Sweden did not fail to protect 14-year old girl after her stepfather attempted to film her naked.**

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**no. 5786/08**  
**21.06.2012**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **E.S. v. SWEDEN**

The Swedish legal system did not fail to provide protection to the applicant against her stepfather's violation of her personal integrity by attempting to secretly film her naked when she was 14 years old

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, E. S., is a Swedish national who was born in 1987 and lives in Ludvika (Sweden). In 2002, when she was 14 years old, she discovered that her stepfather had hidden a video camera in the laundry basket in the bathroom, which was in recording mode and directed towards the spot where she normally undressed.

E.S.'s mother reported the incident to the police about two years later and the stepfather was prosecuted for sexual molestation. The district court found that he had had a sexual intent when filming his stepdaughter nude, despite there being no film as it was burnt by the mother after she discovered the incident.

The stepfather was convicted of sexual molestation by the first instance court. He was finally acquitted on appeal. The appeal court concluded that while his motive had been to film the girl for a sexual purpose, filming someone was not a crime in itself as in Swedish law there was no general prohibition against filming an individual without his or her consent. While the act in question was a violation of the girl's personal integrity, the stepfather could not be held criminally responsible for the isolated act of filming her without her knowledge. His appeal on cassation was dismissed.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court recalled that, under the European Convention, States were not only expected to do no harm, but they were also obliged to act in order to protect. That included the sphere of relations between individuals themselves.

While States enjoyed in principle a wide discretion as to what measures to take in order to ensure respect for private life, putting in place effective criminal law provisions was required to deter people from harming others, especially when the most intimate aspects of people's private lives were concerned. At the same time, only significant flaws in law and practice would result in a breach of Article 8 of the Convention.

The Court was satisfied that, although Swedish law contained no provision about covert filming, laws were in place which could, at least in theory, cover acts such as the one in this case. Thus, following the incident and its reporting to the police, a criminal investigation had been opened. The matter had been examined by courts of three levels of jurisdiction before which the girl had been legally represented and in a position to claim damages. The first instance court had convicted E.S.'s stepfather and the second instance court had acquitted him.

Furthermore, the court of appeal, in its judgment acquitting the stepfather of sexual molestation, had pointed out that his acts, at least theoretically, might have represented the crime of attempted child pornography under the Penal Code. The Court concluded that, at the relevant time, E.S. could have been practically and effectively protected under the Penal Code, as the stepfather could have been convicted either for child molestation or for attempted child pornography.

In addition, the Court recalled that its task was not to review legislation in the abstract. Instead, it had to confine itself to examining issues raised by the cases brought before it. It then considered whether, in the present case, the absence of a provision in the Penal Code on attempted covert filming was a significant flaw in Swedish legislation. It then noted that Sweden had taken active steps in order to combat the general problem of illicit or covert filming of individuals by issuing a proposal to criminalise certain acts of such filming in situations where the act violated personal integrity.

In the light of the above, and having regard to the fact that at the relevant time the stepfather's act was in theory covered by the Penal Code's provisions concerning sexual molestation and attempted child pornography, the Court concluded that there were no significant flaws in Swedish legislation and practice that could amount to a breach of Sweden's positive obligations under Article 8.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8.

### **Separate opinion**

Judges Spielmann, Villiger and Power-Forde expressed a joint dissenting opinion, the text of which is annexed to the judgment.

## **62. Eur. Court of HR, Godelli v. Italy, judgment of 25 September 2012, application no. 33783/09. Confidentiality of information concerning a child's origins: the Italian system does not take account of the child's interests**

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**no. 33783/09  
25.09.2012**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **GODELLI v. ITALY**

Confidentiality of information concerning a child's origins: the Italian system does not take account of the child's interests

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Anita Godelli, is an Italian national who was born in 1943 and lives in Trieste (Italy). She was abandoned at birth by her mother, who did not agree to be identified. After being placed in an orphanage she was adopted by the Godelli family (simple adoption).

At the age of ten, after learning that she had been adopted, the applicant asked her adoptive parents to provide her with details of her origins, without success. She alleged that her childhood had been very difficult because she had not known about her roots.

When she was 63 the applicant again took steps to discover her origins. Her request was refused as Italian law guarantees the right to keep a child's origins secret and the mother's right to have her wishes respected<sup>1</sup>.

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), Ms Godelli complained of her inability to obtain non-identifying information about her birth family. She maintained that she had suffered severe damage as a result of not knowing her personal history, having been unable to trace any of her roots while ensuring the protection of third-party interests.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court pointed out that Article 8 protected a right to identity and personal development; establishing the truth concerning one's personal identity, including the identity of one's parents, was a contributory factor in that development. The circumstances in which a child was born formed part of the child's, and subsequently the adult's, private life guaranteed by Article 8.

The Court reiterated that the issue of access to information about one's origins and the identity of one's natural parents was not of the same nature as that of access to a case record concerning a child in care or to evidence of alleged paternity. Ms Godelli had sought to trace her birth mother, who had abandoned her at birth and had expressly requested that her identity be kept secret. The interests at stake were the mother's interest in preserving her anonymity, that of the child in learning about her origins and the general interest in preventing illegal abortions and the abandonment of children other than under the proper procedure.

The Court stressed that an individual's interest in discovering his or her parentage did not disappear with age, quite the reverse. Although by the age of 69 Ms Godelli's personality was already formed, she had nevertheless shown a genuine interest in ascertaining her mother's identity; such conduct implied mental and psychological suffering.

In contrast to the French system examined in *Odièvre*, the Italian system, which provided no mechanism for balancing the competing interests at stake, inevitably gave blind preference to the sole interests of the birth mother, preventing Ms Godelli from requesting, as was possible under French law, the disclosure of her mother's identity with the latter's consent. A proposal to amend the relevant legislation had been before the Italian Parliament since 2008.

In principle, the choice of the means calculated to secure compliance with Article 8 in the sphere of the relations of individuals between themselves was a matter falling within States' discretion (margin of appreciation). However, in so far as the Italian legislation did not allow a child who had not been formally recognised at birth and who was subsequently adopted to request either access to non-identifying information concerning his or her origins or the disclosure of the mother's identity, the Court considered that the Italian authorities had failed to strike a fair balance between the interests at stake and had overstepped their margin of appreciation.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that Italy was to pay the applicant 5,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 10,000 in respect of costs and expenses.

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<sup>1</sup> Law no 184/1983 guarantees the right to keep a child's origins secret in the absence of express authorisation by the judicial authority .

## Separate opinion

Judge Sajó expressed a dissenting opinion, which is annexed to the judgment.

**63. Eur. Court of HR. *Mitkus v. Latvia*, judgment of 2 October 2012 application no. 7259/03. The applicant complains under Article 8 of the Convention that a newspaper article disclosed information about his HIV infection and published his photo.**

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**no. 7259/03  
02.10.2012**

### **MITKUS v. LATVIA**

The disclosure of the applicant's HIV infection and of his photo on a newspaper violated his rights under Article 8

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Andris Mitkus, is a Latvian national who was born in 1959. Convicted of extortion in April 2001 and of robbery in July 2002, and sentenced to two and a half years' and eight years' imprisonment respectively, he alleged that he had been infected with HIV and hepatitis C while in prison, when medical staff had used a multiple-use syringe to take a sample of his blood, and complained that no adequate investigation had been conducted by the authorities into his allegation. He relied on Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment). Further relying on Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial within reasonable time), he complained about the excessive length of the criminal proceedings against him. Relying on Article 6 § 3 (d) (right to examine or have examined witnesses against oneself), he also complained that the criminal courts had not heard witnesses on his behalf. Under Article 6 § 1, he further complained in particular that he had not been transported to an appeal court hearing concerning two civil claims he had brought for damages. Finally, he complained that a newspaper article which had disclosed information about his HIV infection, and had published his photo, had violated his rights under Article 8 (right to respect for private life).

#### **Law – Articles 3, 6 and 8**

The Court reiterates that in assessing evidence in a claim of a violation of **Article 3** of the Convention, it adopts the standard of proof "beyond reasonable doubt". In the present case the Court notes the existence of different opinions as to exactly when the medical service of Central Prison stopped using reusable syringes for blood tests. Despite this uncertainty the Court considers that reasonable doubts equally persist that the applicant was infected with HIV and hepatitis C only after his arrest. The Court has previously found that the existence of a "window period" for detecting the presence of HIV antibodies means that there exists the possibility that the infection might have been contracted prior to the person's arrest. In the light of the above, the Court finds that the material in the case file does not enable it to conclude beyond all reasonable doubt that the applicant was infected with HIV and hepatitis C after his incarceration. It follows that this complaint is manifestly ill-founded. Nevertheless, the Court finds a violation of Article 3 with regards to (the lack of) investigations of the facts alleged by the applicant according to national law.

With regards to the applicant's claims under **Article 6**, the Court considers that the applicant has failed to demonstrate that the fact that the victim's absence from the proceedings impaired his defence rights to such an extent as to render the whole proceedings unfair. The applicant was convicted on the basis of solid evidence (testimonies of witnesses and his co-defendants, expert reports, and so on). There

has thus been no violation of Article 6 on account of the victim's absence from the applicant's criminal trial. However, the Court also notes that the respondents were present and given an opportunity to make oral submissions to appeal courts in both civil cases instituted by the applicant. The applicant himself was absent, despite having requested that his attendance be ensured. In those circumstances the Court cannot but conclude that the applicant was placed at a significant disadvantage vis-à-vis the respondents. The Court does not exclude that if the circumstances of the case were different and the applicant had been informed in sufficient time that he would not be transported to the hearings, it would not have been contrary to Article 6 § 1 of the Convention for him to be required to appoint a representative should he have wished to submit oral arguments to the court. However, in the proceedings under review the applicant did not receive any advance notification that he would not be able to attend the hearings in person. The appeal courts did nothing to rectify the inequality of arms thus created. There has accordingly been a violation of Article 6 § 1 due to the applicant's absence from the hearings of the appeal courts in the civil proceedings between him and Central Prison and between him and SIA "Mediju nams".

With regards to the claim under **Article 8**, The Court has previously held that the notion of "private life" within the meaning of Article 8 of the Convention is a broad concept which encompasses, inter alia, personal information relating to a patient. The Court sees no reason to depart from that line of reasoning in the present case, which concerns the publication in a newspaper of the applicant's photo, information concerning his health, and his first name and the first letter of his surname. The Court accordingly finds that the applicant's complaint falls within the scope of Article 8 of the Convention, which has also not been disputed by the parties. Concerning the Government's argument that in the present case the alleged interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life was not attributable to the State, the Court notes that, although the object of Article 8 of the Convention is essentially that of protecting the individual against arbitrary interference by public authorities, it does not merely compel the State to abstain from such interference. In addition to this primarily negative undertaking, there may be positive obligations inherent in an effective respect for private or family life. These obligations may involve the adoption of measures designed to secure the right even in the sphere of relations between individuals. What this means is that the Court will need to determine whether the respondent State failed to protect the applicant's Article 8 rights from interference by other individuals. The Court reiterates that, as regards such positive obligations, the notion of "respect" for private life is not clear-cut. In view of the diversity of the practices followed and the situations obtaining in the Contracting States, the notion's requirements will vary considerably from case to case. Accordingly, this is an area in which the Contracting Parties enjoy a wide margin of appreciation in determining the steps to be taken to ensure compliance with the Convention, account being taken of the needs and resources of the community and of individuals. The Court nonetheless notes that Article 8, like any other provision of the Convention or its protocols, must be interpreted in such a way as to guarantee not rights that are theoretical or illusory but rights that are practical and effective. In particular in cases concerning newspaper publications, the Court has previously held that the protection of private life has to be balanced, among other things, against the freedom of expression guaranteed by Article 10 of the Convention. It is therefore important to establish whether in the present case the informative value of the publication in question was sufficient to justify an interference with the right to respect for a person's private life.

The Government suggested that the informative value of the publication in Rīgas Balss derived from the fact that the article reported on unprecedented court proceedings in which representatives of the penitentiary system had been accused of infecting a prisoner with HIV. The Court has indeed previously recognised the publicity of court proceedings and the quality of the work of the judiciary as pertinent topics with an informative value. While the Court recognises that informing the general public about hot topics of jurisprudence is indeed a worthy cause, it remains to be determined whether the Latvian courts struck the correct balance between journalistic freedom and the degree of interference in the applicant's private life. The considerations to be taken into account when appraising the degree of interference with

a person's private life are the extent of that person's pre-existing public exposure and the nature of the information disclosed about that person.

With regard to the degree of interference, the Court in its case-law has vigorously defended the privacy rights of individuals who have not consciously and intentionally submitted themselves to public scrutiny. The same degree of protection is not afforded to public figures. It is evident from the case file that the applicant is not a public figure, however that term might be interpreted, and there is no suggestion to the contrary in the submissions of the Government.

Concerning the nature of the disclosed information, the Court has previously emphasised the importance of the protection of personal data, and in particular of medical data, paying particular attention to the importance of the protection of the confidentiality of a person's HIV status, *inter alia* because of the risk of ostracism of HIV-positive persons.

The Court notes that the applicant's features were clearly visible and distinguishable in the photo that appeared in the publication at issue. Since the article also mentioned his first name and the first letter of his surname as well as details of his past criminal convictions and his place of imprisonment, his identification by his fellow prisoners and other persons was perfectly possible. The applicant has furthermore indicated to the Court that as a result of the publication of the disputed article he was ostracised by other prisoners because of the information about his HIV infection.

As regards the examination of whether the impugned article was written in good faith and in accordance with the ethics of the profession of journalist, The Court has previously found that diligent journalists ought to attempt to contact the subjects of their articles and to give those persons a possibility to comment on the contents of such articles and consent or object to the publishing of the subject's photo. The applicant was not contacted by any representatives of Rīgas Balss. In the light of the applicant's objection to the publication of his photograph and the corresponding order of the Rīga Regional Court, Rīgas Balss could have informed the public about the pending proceedings concerning the alleged negligence of the medical staff at Central Prison without publishing his picture, without the article losing much of its informative value, if any at all.

Taking into account the considerations outlined above and in particular the fact that, as interpreted by the domestic courts, at the relevant time the national data protection laws were not binding on privately published newspaper, the Court finds that the domestic authorities have failed to protect the applicant's right to respect for his private life from interference by the publication of his personal data in Rīgas Balss. There has accordingly been a violation of Article 8 § 1 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Articles 3, 6§1 and 8

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

EUR 16,000 (non-pecuniary damage)

**64. Eur. Court of HR, *Alkaya v. Turkey*, judgment of 9 October 2012, application no. 42811/06.  
Press disclosure of a celebrity's address breached her right to respect for her private and family life.**

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**no. 42811/06  
09.10.2012**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**ALKAYA v. TURKEY**

The disclosure by the press of the home address of a Turkish actress whose apartment had been burgled violated the Convention

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Ms Yasemin Alkaya, is a Turkish national who was born in 1964 and lives in Istanbul (Turkey). She is well known in Turkey as a cinema and theatre actress. On the morning of 12 October 2002 her home was broken into while she was there. She alerted the police and lodged a complaint. On 15 October 2002 the daily newspaper *Akşam* published an article on the break-in, by a photograph of the applicant and giving her exact address.

On 3 December 2002 Ms Alkaya brought an action for damages against the newspaper in the Zeytinburnu District Court ("the District Court"). On 29 March 2005 the District Court dismissed the action, holding that Ms Alkaya, because of her celebrity status, was a public figure and that the disclosure of her address could not be considered capable of infringing her rights. Ms Alkaya lodged an appeal on points of law. Her lawyer submitted that, since the publication of the article in question, the applicant had been regularly disturbed in her home and that she had become fearful and afraid of staying at home on her own. The lawyer further argued that her client's personality rights had been infringed. On 12 June 2006 the Court of Cassation upheld the first-instance judgment.

**Law – Article 8**

The Court pointed out that the concept of private life was a broad term which encompassed the right to personal autonomy and personal development, the person's physical and moral integrity and the right to live privately. The guarantee afforded by Article 8 was intended to ensure the development, without outside interference, of the personality of each individual in his relations with other human beings. The Court further reiterated that Article 8 protected the individual's right to respect for his or her home, meaning not just the right to the actual physical area, but also to the quiet enjoyment of that area. Accordingly, breaches of the right to respect of the home included those that were not concrete or physical. The choice of one's place of residence was an essentially private matter and the free exercise of that choice formed an integral part of the sphere of personal autonomy protected by Article 8. A person's home address constituted personal data or information which fell within the scope of private life and as such was eligible for the protection granted to the latter.

The Court observed that, whereas private individuals unknown to the public could claim particular protection of their right to private life, the same did not apply to public figures. Nevertheless, in certain circumstances, even where a person was known to the general public, he or she could rely on a "legitimate expectation" of protection of and respect for his or her private life.

In the present case the Court noted that it was not a State act that was at issue, but the level of protection afforded by the domestic courts to Ms Alkaya's private life, a level she considered to be insufficient. The

Court had to ascertain whether the State had struck a fair balance between Ms Alkaya's right to protection of her private life under Article 8 of the Convention and the right of the opposing party to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the Convention. Ms Alkaya had in no way sought to challenge the publication of an article reporting on the burglary in her home, but rather had complained of the disclosure of her home address which, in her view, was of no public interest.

In that regard the Court reiterated that, while the public had a right to be informed, articles aimed solely at satisfying the curiosity of a particular readership regarding the details of a person's private life, however well known that person might be, could not be deemed to contribute to any debate of general interest to society. In the present case the Court could not discern any evidence shedding light on the supposed public-interest grounds underlying the newspaper's decision to disclose Ms Alkaya's home address.

The Court observed that the District Court had merely referred to Ms Alkaya's celebrity status in finding that the disclosure of her address could not be considered capable of infringing her personality rights. Likewise, the national courts had not taken into consideration the repercussions on the applicant's life of the disclosure of her private address in the press. In the Court's view, this failure by the domestic courts to weigh the interests at stake could not be considered compatible with the State's positive obligations under Article 8 of the Convention.

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that Turkey was to pay the applicant 7,500 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**65. Eur. Court of HR. M.M. v. the United Kingdom, judgment of 13 November 2012, application no. 24029/07. The applicant complained about retention of caution on criminal record for life. The Court ruled that the retention and disclosure of the applicant's caution data accordingly could not be regarded as having been in accordance with the law.**

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**no. 24029/07**  
**13.11.2012**

Press release issued by the Registrar

#### **M.M. v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Retention of caution on criminal record for life

#### **Basic Facts**

In 2000 the applicant, who lived in Northern Ireland, was arrested by the police after disappearing with her baby grandson for a day in an attempt to prevent his departure to Australia following the breakup of her son's marriage. In view of the circumstances in which the incident had occurred, the authorities decided not to prosecute and the applicant was instead cautioned for child abduction. The caution was initially intended to remain on her record for five years, but owing to a change of policy in cases where the injured party was a child, that period was later extended to life. In 2006 the applicant was offered employment as a health worker subject to vetting, but the offer was withdrawn following a criminal-record check by the prospective employer after she disclosed the caution. In her application to the

European Court, the applicant complained that the change in policy regarding retention of caution data had adversely affected her employment prospects, in breach of her right to respect for her private life.

### **Law – Article 8**

Although data contained in the criminal record were, in one sense, public information, their systematic storing in central records meant that they were available for disclosure long after the event. In the present case, the administration of the caution had occurred almost twelve years earlier. The fact that disclosure had followed upon a request by the applicant or with her consent did not deprive her of the protection afforded to Article 8, as individuals had no real choice if the prospective employer insisted, and was entitled to insist, on disclosure.

Article 8 was thus applicable to the retention and disclosure of the caution, which amounted to interference with the applicant's right to respect for her private life. The scope and application of the system for retention and disclosure in Northern Ireland was extensive: the recording system included non-conviction disposals such as cautions, warnings and reprimands and there was a general presumption in favour of the retention of data in central records until the data subject's hundredth birthday. While there might be a need for a comprehensive record, the indiscriminate and open-ended collection of criminal record data was unlikely to comply with the requirements of Article 8 in the absence of clear and detailed statutory regulations clarifying the safeguards applicable and setting out the rules governing, *inter alia*, the circumstances in which data can be collected, the duration of their storage, the use to which they can be put and the circumstances in which they may be destroyed. In the instant case however there was no statutory law in respect of Northern Ireland governing the collection and storage of data on cautions. Under the applicable guidelines the recording and initial retention of such data were intended in practice to be automatic. The criteria for review appeared to be very restrictive and to focus on whether the data were adequate and up to date. Deletion requests would be granted only in exceptional circumstances and not where the data subject had admitted the offence and the data were accurate. As to the legislation requiring disclosure in the context of a standard or enhanced criminal-record check it made no distinction based on the seriousness or circumstances of the offence, the time which had elapsed since its commission, and whether the caution was spent. The legislation did not allow for any assessment at any stage in the disclosure process of the relevance of conviction or caution data to the employment sought, or of the extent to which the data subject could be perceived as continuing to pose a risk. As a result of the cumulative effect of these shortcomings, the Court was not satisfied that there were sufficient safeguards in the system for retention and disclosure of criminal record data to ensure that data relating to the applicant's private life would not be disclosed in violation of her right to respect for her private life. The retention and disclosure of the applicant's caution data accordingly could not be regarded as having been in accordance with the law.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

**66. Eur. Court of HR. *Michaud v. France*, judgment of 6 December 2012, application no. 12323/11. The applicant alleged that the information protected by lawyer – client privilege is particularly sensitive. The Court noted that the impugned interference was “in accordance with the law” within the meaning of Article 8.**

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**no. 12323/11  
6.12.2012**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **MICHAUD v. FRANCE**

Information protected by lawyer – client privilege is particularly sensitive

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant was a French national and was a member of the Paris Bar and of the Bar Council (*Conseil de l'Ordre*). In July 2007 the National Bar Council (CNB) took a decision concerning the adoption of a professional regulation which placed obligations on lawyers pursuant to European Union Directives aimed at the prevention of money laundering.

This resulted in an obligation on lawyers to report possible suspicions in the area in respect of their clients where, in the context of their professional activities, they assisted them in preparing or carrying out transactions or acted as trustees. They were not subject to this obligation where the activity in question was related to court proceedings and, in principle, where they provided legal advice. Failure to comply with this regulation rendered lawyers liable to disciplinary sanctions.

An application to the *Conseil d'État* to have the decision set aside was dismissed.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The measure in question constituted an interference with the right to respect for correspondence. It also amounted to an interference with lawyers' right to respect for their “private life”, as that concept covers activities of a professional or business nature.

The Court noted, firstly, that the impugned interference was “in accordance with the law” within the meaning of Article 8, and that, as it was intended to combat money

laundering and related criminal offences, it pursued one of the legitimate aims set out in Article 8, namely the prevention of disorder and the prevention of crime.

When considering the nature of the relationship between lawyers and their clients, the Court reiterated that while Article 8 protects the confidentiality of all “correspondence” between individuals, it affords strengthened protection to exchanges between lawyers and their clients.

This was justified by the fact that lawyers were assigned a fundamental role in a democratic society, that of defending litigants. Yet lawyers could not carry out this essential task if they were unable to guarantee to those they were defending that their exchanges would remain confidential.

Two elements were decisive in assessing the proportionality of the measures.

Firstly, lawyers were subject to the obligation to report suspicions only in two cases: where they acted on behalf of their clients in financial or property transactions or acted as trustees; and where they assisted their clients in preparing or carrying out transactions concerning certain defined operations. Thus, the obligation to report suspicions concerned only activities which were remote from the role of defence entrusted to lawyers, and which resembled those carried out by other professionals who were also subject to this obligation.

Secondly, the legislation specified that lawyers were not subject to the obligation where the activity in question was related to court proceedings and, in principle, when they were providing legal advice. The obligation to report suspicions did not therefore go to the very essence of the defence role which underlay legal professional privilege.

The Court also noted the fact that safeguards were in place to protect how the information was reported.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8

**67. Eur. Court of HR. Bernh Larsen Holding AS and Others v. Norway, judgment of 14 March 2013, application no. 24117/08. The applicants complained about a decision ordering them to provide the tax auditors with a copy of all data on a computer server which the three companies used jointly. The Court considered that a fair balance has been struck between the companies' right to respect for "home" and "correspondence" and their interest in protecting the privacy of persons working for them, on the one hand, and the public interest in ensuring efficient inspection for tax assessment purposes, on the other hand. Therefore it is in accordance with the law.**

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**no. 24117/08**  
**14.3.2013**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **BERNH LARSEN HOLDING AS AND OTHERS v. NORWAY**

Lack of a requirement for prior judicial authorisation - a fair balance has been struck

#### **Basic Facts**

Three applicant companies, B.L.H., a holding company, Kver and I.O.R. (and two other companies) had their business address at premises owned by Kver. They shared a common server for their respective information technology systems. In March 2004 the regional tax authorities requested one of the applicant companies, Bernh Larsen Holding (B.L.H.), to allow tax auditors to make a copy of all data on the server. While B.L.H. agreed to grant access, it refused to supply a copy of the entire server, arguing that it was owned by the second applicant company (Kver) and was also used for information storage by other companies. When Kver in turn opposed the seizure of the entire server, the tax authorities issued a notice that it, too, would be audited. The two companies then agreed to hand over a backup tape of the data of the previous months, but immediately lodged a complaint with the central tax authority and requested the speedy return of the tape, which was sealed pending a decision on their complaint. After being informed by Kver that three other companies also used the server and were affected by the seizure, the tax authorities notified those companies that they would also be audited. One of them, Increased Oil Recovery (I.O.R.), subsequently lodged a complaint with the central tax authority. In June

2004 the central tax authority withdrew the notice that an audit of Kver and I.O.R. would be carried out, but confirmed that B.L.H. would be audited and was obliged to give the authorities access to the server. That decision was upheld by the Supreme Court.

## **Law – Article 8**

The measure in question constituted an interference with their “home” and “correspondence” for the purpose of Article 8. It was unnecessary to determine whether there had also been interference with the companies’ “private life” as none of the employees whose personal e-mails and correspondence were allegedly backed up on the server had lodged a complaint. The Court would, however, take the companies’ legitimate interest in ensuring the protection of the privacy of persons working for them into account when examining whether the interference was justified.

The Court noted firstly that the interference had a basis in national law and the law in question was accessible. The Court was also satisfied that it was sufficiently precise and foreseeable. As the Supreme Court had explained, the tax authorities needed, for reasons of efficiency, relatively wide scope to act at the preparatory stage. That was not to say that the relevant provisions had conferred on the tax authorities an unfettered discretion, as the object of an order to access documents was clearly defined. In particular, the authorities could not require access to archives belonging entirely to other taxpayers. Where, however, as here, the applicant companies’ archives were not clearly separated, but “mixed”, it was reasonably foreseeable that the tax authorities should not have to rely on the taxpayers’ own indications of where to find relevant material, but should have access to all data on the server to appraise the matter for themselves. The Court further found that the interference had pursued the legitimate aim of securing the economic well-being of the country.

Secondly, as to whether the measure had been necessary in a democratic society, there was no reason to call into doubt the Norwegian legislatures. The tax authorities’ justification for obtaining access to the server and a backup copy with a view to carrying out a review of its contents on their premises had therefore been supported by reasons that were both relevant and sufficient.

Also, as to proportionality, the procedure had been accompanied by a number of safeguards. One of the applicant companies had been notified of the tax authorities’ intention to carry out a tax audit a year in advance, and both its representatives and those of another of the applicant companies had been present and able to express their views. The companies were entitled to object to the measure and had done so and the backup copy had been placed in a sealed envelope and deposited at the tax office pending a decision on their complaint. The relevant legal provisions included further safeguards, furthermore, once the review had been completed, the backup copy would be destroyed.

Finally, the nature of the interference was not of the same seriousness and degree as was ordinarily the case in search and seizure operations carried out under the criminal law. The consequences of a taxpayer’s refusal to cooperate were exclusively administrative. Moreover, the measure had in part been made necessary by the applicant companies’ own choice to opt for “mixed archives” on a shared server.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8

**68. Eur. Court of HR. Saint-Paul Luxembourg S.A. v. Luxembourg, judgment of 18 April 2013, application no. 26419/10. The applicant argued that the search and seizure operation carried out at his company's premises had been intrusive. The incident amounted to interference with the applicant company's right to respect for its "home". The Court recognized that the interference had been in accordance with the law and had pursued several legitimate aims but ruled that these measures weren't necessary at this stage of the investigation.**

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**no. 26419/10**  
**18.4.2013**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **SAINT-PAUL LUXEMBOURG S.A. v. LUXEMBOURG**

Order for search and seizure couched in wide term at newspaper – disproportionate to the aim sought to be achieved

#### **Basic Facts**

Domingos Martins, is a journalist for the newspaper Contacto, which is edited by the applicant company Saint-Paul Luxembourg S.A.. In December 2008, the applicant company's newspaper published an article under the name of "Domingos Martins". In this article he described the situation of families who had lost the custody of their children, and named some of the persons concerned. In January 2009, the prosecuting authorities opened a judicial investigation concerning the author of the article for a breach of the legislation on the protection of minors and for defamation. In March 2009, an investigating judge issued a search and seizure warrant in respect of the registered office of the applicant company in its capacity as the newspaper's publisher. In May 2009, police officers visited the newspaper's premises. The journalist gave them a copy of the newspaper, a notebook and various documents used in preparing the article, and one of the police officers inserted a USB key in the journalist's computer. All the applications made by the applicant company and the journalist were rejected.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The measure in question constituted an interference with the company's right to respect for its home. The search and seizure operation carried out at the applicant company's premises had been intrusive, notwithstanding the fact that the journalist had cooperated with the police, who could have executed the measure by force had he refused to cooperate.

The interference had been in accordance with the law and had pursued several legitimate aims. Firstly, the prevention of disorder and crime – as the measure had been designed to determine the true identity of a person facing criminal prosecution in the context of a judicial investigation and to elucidate the circumstances of a possible offence. Secondly, the protection of the rights of others, as the article in question had implicated named individuals and reported on a relatively serious matter.

The journalist had written the article under the name "Domingos Martins". The list of officially recognised journalists in Luxembourg did include in relation to the newspaper Contacto the name "De Araujo Martins Domingos Alberto". The similarity between the names, the unusual combination of elements they contained and the link to the newspaper in question made the connection between the author of the article and the person on the list obvious. On the basis of that information, the investigating judge could initially have employed a less intrusive measure than a search in order to confirm the identity of the

person who had written the article. The search and seizure operation had therefore not been necessary. The measures complained of had not been reasonably proportionate to the legitimate aims pursued.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Law-Article 10**

The measure in question constituted an interference with applicant company's freedom to receive and impart information. The search and seizure operation at the applicant company's registered office had therefore been disproportionate to the aim sought to be achieved.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 10.

**69. Eur. Court of HR. M.K. v. France, judgment of 18 April 2013, application no. 19522/09. The Court found that the absence of safeguards for collection, preservation and deletion of fingerprint records of persons suspected but not convicted of criminal offences is contrary to Article 8 of the Convention.**

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**no. 19522/09**  
**18.4.2013**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **M.K. v. FRANCE**

Procedures for the retention of the data - Absence of safeguards

### **Basic Facts**

In 2004 and 2005 the applicant was the subject of two investigations concerning the theft of some books. He was acquitted following the first set of proceedings and the second set of proceedings was discontinued. On both occasions his fingerprints were taken and recorded in the fingerprint database. In 2006 the applicant requested the deletion of his prints from the database. His request was granted only in relation to the prints taken during the first set of proceedings. The appeals lodged by the applicant were dismissed.

### **Law – Article 8**

The measure in question constituted a disproportionate interference with the right to respect for the private life and could not be said to be necessary in a democratic society. The system for retaining the fingerprints of persons suspected of an offence but not convicted, as applied to the applicant in the present case, did not strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests at stake. The Court noted, firstly, that the procedures for the gathering and retention of the data have the purpose of the database, notwithstanding the legitimate aim pursued – namely, the detection and prevention of crime – necessarily implied the addition and retention of as many entries as possible. Furthermore, the reason invoked by the public prosecutor for refusing to delete the fingerprints taken during the second set of proceedings had been the need to safeguard the applicant's interests by ensuring that his involvement could be ruled out should someone attempt to assume his identity. Besides the fact that

the decree concerning the fingerprints database, unless it was interpreted particularly broadly, contained no express reference to such grounds, accepting the argument as to the supposed protection against potential identity theft by third persons would be tantamount in practice to permitting the storage of data concerning the entire French population, a measure that would clearly be excessive and redundant.

Secondly, in addition to the primary purpose of the database, which was to make it easier to trace and identify the perpetrators of serious crimes and other major offences, the legislation referred to a second purpose, namely “to facilitate the prosecution, investigation and trial of cases before the judicial authority”. It was not stated clearly that this related solely to serious crimes and other major offences. Since the legislation referred also to “persons implicated in criminal proceedings who need to be identified”, it could in practice be applied to all offences, including minor ones, in so far as this would enable the perpetrators of serious crimes and other major offences to be identified. The present case was thus clearly distinguishable from those relating specifically to serious offences such as organised crime or sexual assault. Furthermore, the decree in question did not make any distinction based on whether or not the person concerned had been convicted by a court or had even been prosecuted.

The Court also noted the provisions of the impugned decree governing the retention of data did not afford the sufficient protection to the persons concerned.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

**70. Eur. Court of HR, Avilkina and Others v. Russia, judgment of 6 June 2013, application no. 1585/09. The applicants claimed that the unjustified disclosure of confidential medical data relating to the refusal of Jehovah’s Witnesses to undergo a blood transfusion, is contrary to Article 8. The order of the disclosure of the applicants’ confidential medical information without giving them any notice or opportunity to object or appeal is illegitimate.**

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**no. 1585/09**

**6.6.2013**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**AVILKINA AND OTHERS v. RUSSIA**

Unjustified disclosure of confidential medical data

**Basic Facts**

The applicants were the Administrative Center of Jehova's Witnesses in Russia, seated in St. Petersburg, and three private persons, Ms Avilkina, MsDubinina and Zhukova. In 2007, following several complaints against the religious organisation, the Deputy City Prosecutor of St Petersburg asked all medical institutions to report every refusal of a blood transfusion by Jehovah’s Witnesses. When the second applicant underwent chemotherapy in a public hospital following a non-blood management treatment plan, her doctors informed the prosecutor’s office of her case. Similarly, the fourth applicant’s medical records were disclosed to the prosecutor’s office after she refused the use of foreign blood for surgical treatment in a state hospital.

## Law – Article 8

The measure in question constituted an interference with the right to respect for the private life. The Court recalls that the protection of personal data, including medical information, was of fundamental importance to the enjoyment of the right to respect for private life. Also, the Court acknowledged that the interests of a patient and the community as a whole in protecting the confidentiality of medical data might be outweighed by the interests of investigating crime and in the publicity of court proceedings. The competent national authorities have a margin of appreciation in this area. However, the applicants were not suspects or accused in any criminal proceedings and the prosecutor was merely conducting an investigation into the activities of a religious organisation in response to complaints received by his office. Nor did the medical facilities where the applicants underwent treatment report any instances of alleged criminal behaviour on the part of the applicants. Likewise, there was nothing to suggest that the fourth applicant's refusal of a blood transfusion was the result of pressure by other adherents of her religious beliefs and not the expression of her true will. There was consequently no pressing social need for requesting the disclosure of the confidential medical information concerning the applicants. In fact, there were other options available to the prosecutor to follow up on the complaints he had received. Despite this, the prosecutor had chosen to order the disclosure of their confidential medical information without giving the applicants any notice or opportunity to object or appeal.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**71. Eur. Court of HR. *Węgrzynowski and Smolczewski v. Poland*, judgment of 16 July 2013, application no. 33846/07. The applicants complained about Court's refusal to order the newspaper to remove an article damaging the applicants' reputation from its Internet archive. The respondent State had complied with its obligation to strike a balance between the rights guaranteed under Article 8 and 10 of the Convention.**

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**no. 33846/07**

**16.7.2013**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **WĘGRZYNOWSKI AND SMOLCZEWSKI v. POLAND**

Newspaper was not obliged to completely remove from its Internet archive article found by a court to be inaccurate

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicants are lawyers who won a libel case against two journalists working for the daily newspaper Rzeczpospolita following the publication of an article. The domestic courts convicted them because the journalists' allegations were largely based on gossip and hearsay. These obligations were complied with. Subsequently, the applicants discovered that the article remained accessible on the newspaper's website. This resulted in fresh proceedings in order for its removal from the website. Their claim was dismissed on the grounds that ordering removal of the article would amount to censorship. However, the court indicated that it would have given serious consideration to a request for a footnote or link informing readers of the judgments in the original libel proceedings to be added to the website article. That judgment was upheld on appeal.

## Law – Article 8

This measure in question respects the right for the private life and reputation. Regarding the first set of proceedings, the Court noted in regards of the first applicant that during the first set of civil proceedings he had failed to make claims regarding the publication of the impugned article on the Internet. The domestic courts had therefore not been able to decide that matter. The applicant had not advanced any arguments to justify his failure to address the issue of the article's presence online during the first set of proceedings, especially in view of the fact that the Internet archive of Rzeczpospolita was a widely known and frequently used resource.

As to the second set of proceedings, the Court accepted that it was not the role of judicial authorities to engage in rewriting history by ordering the removal from the public domain of all traces of publications which had in the past been found, by final judicial decisions, to amount to unjustified attacks on individual reputations. Furthermore, Article 10 of the Convention protects the legitimate interest of the public in access to public Internet archives of the press. Also, the domestic courts pointed out that it would be desirable to add a comment to the article on the newspaper's website informing the public of the outcome of the first set of proceedings. The Court judged that this demonstrated their awareness of how important publications on the Internet could be for the effective protection of individual rights and of the importance of giving full information about judicial decisions concerning a contested article available on the newspaper's website. The second applicant had not, however, requested the addition of a reference to the judgments in his favour.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8

**72. Eur. Court of HR. Radu v. the Republic of Moldova, judgment of 15 April 2014, application no. 50073/07. The applicant complained about a State-owned hospital's disclosure of medical information to her employer. The proceedings were brought against the hospital and the Police Academy claiming compensation for a breach of her right to private life. The Court found that the interference was not "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of Article 8.**

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**no. 50073/07**  
**15.4.2014**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **RADU v. THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

Hospital's disclosure of sensitive information about applicant's health to her employer breached the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Liliana Radu, is a Moldovan national who was born in 1969 and lives in Chişinău. The case concerned her complaint about a State-owned hospital's disclosure of medical information about her to her employer. She was a lecturer at the Police Academy and in August 2003, pregnant with twins, was hospitalised for a fortnight due to a risk of her miscarrying. She gave a sick note certifying her absence from work. However, the Police Academy requested further information from the hospital concerning her sick leave, and it replied in November 2003, providing more information about her

pregnancy, her state of health and the treatment she had been given. The information was widely circulated at Ms Radu's place of work and, shortly afterwards, she had a miscarriage due to stress. She brought proceedings against the hospital and the Police Academy claiming compensation for a breach of her right to private life, which were ultimately dismissed in May 2007 by the Supreme Court as it considered that the hospital had been entitled to disclose the requested information to Ms Radu's employer. Relying in particular on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), Ms Radu complained about the hospital's disclosure of sensitive information about her health to her employer.

### **Law – Article 8**

It is undisputed between the parties, and the Court agrees, that the disclosure by the CFD to the applicant's employer of such sensitive details about the applicant's pregnancy, her state of health and the treatment received constituted an interference with her right to private life. An interference will contravene Article 8 unless it is "in accordance with the law", pursues one or more of the legitimate aims referred to in paragraph 2 of that Article, and furthermore is "necessary in a democratic society" in order to achieve the aim. The expression "in accordance with the law" not only necessitates compliance with domestic law, but also relates to the quality of that law. The Court reiterates that domestic law must indicate with reasonable clarity the scope and manner of exercise of the relevant discretion conferred on the public authorities so as to ensure to individuals the minimum degree of protection to which citizens are entitled under the rule of law in a democratic society. In fact, the Supreme Court merely stated that the CFD was entitled to disclose the information to the applicant's employer, without citing any legal basis for such disclosure. Even assuming that the Supreme Court had intended to rely on that provision, the Court notes that under section 8 of that Law a doctor would not be entitled to disclose information of a personal nature even to the applicant's employer without her consent. In fact, the Court notes that all the relevant domestic and international law cited above expressly prohibits disclosure of such information to the point that it even constitutes a criminal offence. There are exceptions to the rule of nondisclosure; however, none of them seems to be applicable to the applicant's situation. Indeed, the Government did not show that any such exception was applicable. It follows that the interference complained of was not "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of Article 8. Accordingly, there is no need to examine whether the interference pursued a legitimate aim or was "necessary in a democratic society".

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

EUR 4,500 (non-pecuniary damage) and EUR 1,440 (costs and expenses)

**73. Eur. Court of HR. L.H. v Latvia, judgment of 29 April 2014, application no. 52019/07. The applicant complained about a lack of precision of domestic law that allows public authorities the collection of his medical data. The Court found that the applicable law had failed to indicate with sufficient clarity the scope of discretion conferred on competent authorities and manner of its exercise.**

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**no. 52019/07**  
**29.4.2014**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **L.H. v. LATVIA**

Collection of applicant's medical data - Lack of precision of domestic law

#### **Basic Facts**

On 16 June 1997 the applicant gave birth in the Cēsis District Central Hospital. During her delivery, the surgeon performed tubal ligation on the applicant without her consent. The applicant filed a civil action in damages against the hospital which was ultimately successful. At the request of the hospital's Director the Inspectorate of Quality Control for Medical Care and Fitness for Work ("MADEKKI") carried out an assessment and evaluation of the medical treatment the applicant had received in his institution.

During the subsequent administrative inquiry, MADEKKI requested and received the applicant's medical files from three different medical institutions and ultimately issued a report concluding that no laws had been violated during the applicant's childbirth. The applicant subsequently challenged the lawfulness of the administrative inquiry undertaken by MADEKKI, but her claim was dismissed, as the Senate of the Supreme Court having found that domestic law authorised MADEKKI to examine the quality of medical care provided in medical institutions at their request.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The measure in question constituted an interference with the private right. The Court found that the applicable law had failed to indicate with sufficient clarity the scope of discretion conferred on competent authorities and the manner of its exercise.

Firstly, the Court had to examine whether the applicable domestic law had been formulated with sufficient precision and whether it afforded adequate safeguards against arbitrariness. In this connection it firstly observed that the applicable legal norms described the competence of MADEKKI in a very general manner and that there did not seem to be a legal basis for a hospital to seek independent expert advice from it in on-going civil litigation.

Secondly, the domestic law in no way limited the scope of private data that could be collected by MADEKKI during such inquiries, which resulted in it collecting medical data on the applicant relating to a seven-year period indiscriminately and without any prior assessment of whether such data could be potentially decisive, relevant or of importance for achieving whatever aim might have been pursued by the inquiry. Finally, the fact that the inquiry had commenced seven years after the applicant's sterilisation raised doubts as to whether the data collection was "necessary for purposes of medical treatment [or] provision or administration of health care services" as required under domestic law.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**74. Eur. Court of HR. *Elberte v Latvia*, judgment of 13 January 2015, application no. 61243/08.** The case concerned the removal of body tissue from Ms Elberte's deceased husband by forensic experts after his death, without her knowledge or consent. Unknown to Ms Elberte, pursuant to a State-approved agreement, tissue had been removed from her husband's body after her husband's autopsy and sent to a pharmaceutical company in Germany for the creation of bio-implants. She only learned about the course of events two years after her husband's death when a criminal investigation was launched in Latvia into allegations of wide-scale illegal removal of organs and tissues from cadavers. However, domestic authorities eventually did not establish any elements of crime.

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no. 61243/08

13/01/2015

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **ELBERTE v. LATVIA**

Removal of tissue from a deceased man's body without the knowledge or consent of his wife amounted to degrading treatment

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Dzintra Elberte, is a Latvian national who was born in 1969 and lives in Sigulda (Latvia). On 19 May 2001, Ms Elberte's husband was killed in a car accident. On the following day, his body was transported to the Forensic Centre, where an autopsy was carried out. Ms Elberte first saw her deceased husband when his remains were transported back from the Forensic Centre for the funeral. His legs had been tied together and he was buried that way. About two years later, the Security Police opened a criminal inquiry into the illegal removal of organs and tissue between 1994 and 2003 in Latvia and contacted Ms Elberte, who was told that tissue had been removed from her husband's body prior to the funeral by the experts of the Forensic Centre. Under a State-approved agreement, some of his body tissue had been removed and later sent to a pharmaceutical company in Germany to be modified into bio implants. On 9 October 2003, Ms Elberte was recognised as an injured party. In December 2005 and January 2006, the prosecutors decided to discontinue the inquiry. They accepted that, under the 2004 amendments to the Law on the Protection of the Bodies of Deceased Persons and the Use of Human Organs and Tissues ("the Law"), the Latvian system was one of "presumed consent". According to the Forensic Centre specialists, this meant that "everything which was not forbidden was allowed" as opposed to an "informed consent" system, whereby tissue removal was permissible only when it was expressly allowed by the donor during his or her lifetime or by the relatives. On two occasions, on 24 February 2006 and 3 December 2007, superior prosecuting authorities examined the case-file and concluded that the inquiry should not have been discontinued. They established that the experts at the Forensic Centre had breached provisions of the Law and that the tissue removal had been unlawful. The decision to discontinue was quashed on both occasions and the case file sent back to the Security Police. During the course of the fresh investigation which started in March 2008, it was established that in 1999 tissue had been removed from 152 people; in 2000, from 151 people; in 2001, from 127 people; and in 2002, from 65 people. In exchange for the supply of tissue to the company in Germany, the Forensic Centre had organised the purchase of different medical equipment, instruments, technology and computers for medical institutions in Latvia. On 27 June 2008 a new decision to discontinue the criminal inquiry was adopted, in which it was reiterated that the experts did not have any legal obligation to inform anyone about their right to consent to or refuse organ or tissue removal. Notably, the Law provided for the right of the closest relatives to object to the removal of the deceased person's organs

and tissue, but did not impose such an obligation. Consequently, the Forensic Centre experts could not be convicted of breaching an obligation which was not clearly established by law.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that the issue in question was the right of Ms Elberte to express wishes concerning the removal of her husband's tissue after his death and the domestic authorities' alleged failure to ensure the legal and practical conditions for the exercise of that right.

The Court observed that the very authorities responsible for the enforcement of the applicable law. In particular the Security Police and the supervising prosecutors – had disagreed as to its scope. Such disagreement had inevitably indicated a lack of sufficient clarity. Indeed, although Latvian law set out the legal framework allowing the closest relatives to express consent or refusal in relation to tissue removal, it had not clearly defined the scope of the corresponding obligation or discretion left to experts or other authorities in this respect. The Court noted that the relevant European and international documents on this matter gave particular importance to establishing the relatives' views through reasonable enquiries.

In view of the large number of people from whom tissue removal had been carried out, it had been all the more important that adequate mechanisms had been in place to balance the relatives' right to express their wishes against the experts' broad discretion to decide on such matters. Because of the lack of any administrative or legal regulation, Ms Elberte had been unable to foresee how to exercise her right to express her wishes concerning the removal of her husband's tissue. The Court concluded that the relevant Latvian law lacked clarity and did not have adequate legal safeguards against arbitrariness, in breach of Article 8.

### **Law – Article 3**

The Court found that Ms Elberte's suffering had gone beyond the suffering inflicted by grief following the death of a close family member. Indeed, she had only discovered the nature and amount of tissue that had been removed from her husband's body during the proceedings before the European Court. While it could not be said that she had suffered from any prolonged uncertainty regarding the fate of her husband, she had had to face a long period of uncertainty and distress as to what organs or tissue had been taken, and in what manner and for what purpose.

Moreover, the revelation, following the general inquiry, that body tissue had been removed from hundreds of other persons over a time-span of some nine years had caused additional suffering for Ms. Elberte. The Court further noted that she had been left for a considerable period of time to anguish over the reasons why her husband's legs had been tied together when his body had been returned to her and that, because no prosecutions had ever been brought, she had been denied redress for a breach of her personal rights relating to a very sensitive aspect of her private life, namely consenting or objecting to the removal of tissue from her husband's body.

The Court underlined that, in the special field of organ and tissue transplantation, it had been recognised that the human body had to be treated with respect even after death. Indeed, international treaties including the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine and the Additional Protocol had been drafted to protect the dignity, identity and integrity of "everyone" who had been born, whether now living or dead. The Court stressed that respect for human dignity formed part of the very essence of the European Convention. Consequently, the suffering caused to Ms Elberte had undoubtedly amounted to degrading treatment contrary to Article 3 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8 of the Convention

## Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)

The Court held that Latvia was to pay Ms Elberte 16,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 500 in respect of costs and expenses.

**75. Eur. Court of HR. Brunet v France, judgment of 18 September 2014, application no. 21010/10.**  
The applicant complained about his registration in a recorded offences database after criminal proceedings against him were discontinued. The prosecutor rejected definitively the applicant's demand of removal arguing that the law doesn't allow him to. The applicant couldn't reach a real opportunity to ask the removal of his data. The retention could be regarded as a disproportionate breach of the applicant's right to respect for his private life and was not necessary in a democratic society. The State had overstepped its discretion to decide and thus violated Article 8.

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no. 21010/10  
18.9.2014

Press release issued by the Registrar

### BRUNET v. FRANCE

French crime database system in breach of Convention for storing information on individuals against whom proceedings have been dropped

#### Basic Facts

The applicant, Francois Xavier Brunet, is a French national who was born in 1959 and lives in Yerres (France). On 10 October 2008 Mr Brunet had a violent row with his partner, who filed a complaint with the public prosecutor of Evry. The applicant was taken into police custody. He in turn filed a complaint against his partner for assault, but it was never followed up. He was released and summoned for criminal mediation. On 12 October 2008 Mr Brunet and his partner wrote to the public prosecutor to express their disagreement with the detailed classification of the offence the applicant was said to have committed, as stated in his summons for criminal mediation. The mediation nevertheless went ahead and the proceedings were then discontinued. As a result of the accusation, Mr Brunet was listed in the recorded crimes database (the "STIC" system), which contains information from investigation reports based on files drawn up by officers of the police, gendarmerie and customs. In a letter of 11 April 2009 Mr Brunet asked the public prosecutor to delete his details from the database, arguing that their inclusion was unjustified because his partner had withdrawn her complaint. The public prosecutor rejected his request on the ground that the proceedings had been "discontinued on the basis of a cause other than: no offence ... or insufficiently established offence...". The applicant was informed that no appeal lay against that decision.

#### Law - Article 8

The Court observed that the inclusion in the STIC database of data concerning Mr Brunet had constituted an interference with his right to respect for his private life; an interference which was in accordance with the law and which pursued the legitimate aims of the prevention of disorder and crime and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. It then examined whether that interference met

a “pressing social need” and, in particular, whether it was proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued and whether the grounds given by the domestic authorities to justify it appeared “relevant and sufficient”. The Court observed that Mr Brunet had complained about the potential interference with his private and family life because of his inclusion in the database, arguing that, if he and his partner separated and there were proceedings before the family judge, consultation of the database could lead to the rejection of his application for custody of their child. However, as that judge was not one of the officials who had access to the database in question, the Court found that the situation complained of by the applicant was not likely to materialise.

Mr Brunet also complained about the abusive nature of his inclusion in the STIC database. On that point the Court noted that the information contained in the database was quite intrusive in nature. While that information did not contain the individuals’ fingerprints or DNA profile, it consisted of details on identity and personality, in a database that was supposed to be used for researching crimes. In addition, the retention time of the personal record, 20 years, was particularly lengthy in view of the fact that Mr Brunet had not been found guilty by a court and that the proceedings had been discontinued. The Court then looked at whether such a retention time was proportionate, taking account of the possibility for the individual concerned to seek early deletion of personal data. In that connection, it noted that the law, as it stood at the relevant time and as currently in force, entitled the public prosecutor to order the deletion of a personal record only in a limited number of situations and, in the case of discontinuance, only if that decision had been justified by insufficient evidence. In rejecting Mr Brunet’s request, the public prosecutor of Evry had applied the law strictly. He did not have the power to verify the pertinence of maintaining the information in question in the STIC database in the light of its purpose, or having regard to factual and personality-related elements.

Consequently, the Court took the view that the public prosecutor had no power of discretion to assess the appropriateness of retaining such data, such that his supervision could not be regarded as effective. The Court further noted that at the relevant time no appeal lay against the public prosecutor’s decision. Therefore, even though the retention of the information in the STIC database was limited in time, Mr Brunet had not had any real possibility of requesting the deletion of the data concerning him and, in a situation such as his, the envisaged duration of 20 years could in practice be assimilated, if not to indefinite retention, at least to a norm rather than to a maximum limit.

In conclusion, the Court took the view that the State had overstepped its margin of appreciation in such matters, and that the rules for the conservation of records in the STIC database, as applied to Mr Brunet, did not strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests at stake. Accordingly, the impugned retention could be regarded as a disproportionate interference with Mr Brunet’s right to respect for his private life and was not necessary in a democratic society.

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that France was to pay the applicant 3,000 euros in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**76. Eur. Court of HR. *Dragojević v. Croatia*, judgment of 15 January 2015, application no. 68955/11.** The case principally concerned the secret surveillance of telephone conversations of a drug trafficking suspect. The Court found in particular that Croatian law, as interpreted by the national courts, did not provide reasonable clarity as to the authorities' discretion in ordering surveillance measures and it did not in practice – as applied in Mr Dragojević's case – provide sufficient safeguards against possible abuse.

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**No. 68955/11  
15.01.2015**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **DRAGOJEVIĆ v. CROATIA**

Insufficient reasons given by Croatian courts when ordering telephone tapping of drug-trafficking suspect

#### **Basic Facts**

In 2007 the applicant was suspected of involvement in drug-trafficking. At the request of the prosecuting authorities, the investigating judge authorized the use of secret surveillance measures to covertly monitor the applicant's telephone. In 2009 the applicant was found guilty of drug-trafficking and money laundering and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. His conviction was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2010 and his constitutional complaint was dismissed in 2011.

#### **Law - Article 8**

Tapping the applicant's telephone constituted an interference with his rights to respect for his "private life" and "correspondence".

Under domestic law, the use of secret surveillance was subject to prior authorization. However, in the applicant's case the orders issued by the investigating judge were based only on a statement referring to the prosecuting authorities' request and the assertion that "the investigation could not be conducted by other means", without any information as to whether less intrusive means were available. That approach was endorsed by the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court. In an area as sensitive as the use of secret surveillance the Court had difficulties accepting such interpretation of the domestic law, which envisaged prior detailed judicial scrutiny of the proportionality of the use of secret surveillance measures. The domestic courts' circumvention of this requirement by retrospective justification opened the door to arbitrariness and could not provide adequate and sufficient safeguards against potential abuse.

In the applicant's case, the criminal courts had limited their assessment of the use of secret surveillance to the extent relevant to the admissibility of the evidence thus obtained, without going into the substance of the Convention requirements concerning the allegations of arbitrary interference with the applicant's Article 8 rights. The Government had not provided any information on remedies which could be available to a person in the applicant's situation. Therefore, the relevant domestic law, as interpreted and applied by the domestic courts, was not sufficiently clear as to the scope and manner of exercise of the discretion conferred on the public authorities, and did not secure adequate safeguards against possible abuse. Accordingly, the procedure for ordering and supervising the implementation of the interception of the applicant's telephone had not complied with the requirements of lawfulness, nor was it adequate to keep the interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life and correspondence to what was "necessary in a democratic society".

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

EUR 7,500 in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**77. Eur. Court of HR. Case Yuditskaya and others v. Russia, judgment of 12 February 2015, application no. 5678/06. The applicants alleged, in particular, that there had been no grounds for conducting a search of the premises of their law firm and seizing their computers. The Court concluded that there has been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.**

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**no. 5678/06**  
**12.02.2015**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**YUDITSKAYA AND OTHERS v. RUSSIA**

The Search of the applicants' legal offices and the seizure of their computers: interference with the right to respect for "private life", "home" and "correspondence"

**Basic Facts**

The applicants, Dina Yuditskaya, Natalya Yuditskaya, Aleksandr Kichev, Yelena Lavrentyeva and Valeriy Frolovich, are Russian nationals who live in Perm (Russia). The case concerned a search of the law firm for which they work as lawyers.

In May 2005 investigators carried out a search of the premises of the law firm where the applicants work. The search had been authorised by a court in the context of a criminal investigation into bribe-taking by court bailiffs. One lawyer working in the applicants' law firm was suspected of having signed a fictitious legal assistance contract with a State enterprise which was involved in the alleged offence. According to the applicants, they voluntarily handed over all documents sought by the investigators; nevertheless all offices, including those of the applicants who had no relationship with the State enterprise concerned were searched, and all computers were taken away for one week. The applicants' complaint against the search warrant was dismissed by the courts in June 2005. The applicants complained that the search conducted in their office and the seizure of their computers containing privileged information had amounted to a violation of their rights, in particular, under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life, the home and the correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

**Law- Article 8**

The Court was mindful of the fact that only lawyer I.T. had been suspected of being an accessory to the crime. The applicants were not the subjects of any criminal investigation. Having regard to the above, the Court didn't accept that the search warrant was based on reasonable suspicion. The Court also considers that the search warrant was couched in very broad terms, giving the investigators unrestricted discretion in the conduct of the search. According to the Court's case-law, search warrants have to be drafted, as far as practicable, in a manner calculated to keep their impact within reasonable bounds. The Court considers that the search carried out in the absence of a reasonable suspicion or any safeguards against interference with professional secrecy at the applicants' legal offices and the seizure of their computers went beyond what was "necessary in a democratic society" to achieve the legitimate aim pursued.

**Conclusion:** Violation (unanimously)

**78. Eur. Court of HR. Haldimann and Others v Switzerland, judgment of 24 February 2015, application no. 21830/09. Balance between freedom of expression and right to privacy. The applicants complained about their conviction for having recorded and broadcasted an interview of a private insurance broker using a hidden camera. In the video, the broker's face was pixelated and his voice. The Court considered that the interference in the private life of the broker, who had turned down an opportunity to express his views on the interview in question, had not been serious enough to override the public interest in information on malpractice in the field of insurance brokerage. The Court found, by majority, that there had been a violation of the freedom of expression.**

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**no. 21830/09  
24.02.2015**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **HALDIMANN AND OTHERS v. SWITZERLAND**

Conviction of journalists for an interview using a hidden camera infringed their freedom of expression

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicants, Ulrich Mathias Haldimann, Hansjörg Utz, Monika Annemarie Balmer and Fiona Ruth Strebel, are Swiss nationals who were born in 1953, 1950 and 1969 and live in Uster, Zurich, Bäretswil and Nussbaumen respectively. They are journalists. In February 2003 Ms Balmer, the editor of "*Kassensturz*", a weekly TV programme on consumer protection, which has been a regular feature on Swiss German television (SF DRS) for many years, prepared a documentary on sales of life insurance products, against a background of public discontent with the practices used by insurance brokers. She agreed with the editor responsible for the programme, Mr Utz, and Mr Haldimann, the editor-in-chief of SF DRS, to record interviews between customers and brokers, using a hidden camera to highlight insurance broker malpractice. Ms Strebel, an SF DRS journalist posing as a customer, met with an insurance broker from company X on 26 February 2003. Two hidden cameras were placed in the room in which the interview was to take place, transmitting the recording of the conversation to a neighbouring room in which Ms Balmer and an insurance specialist had taken up position. At the end of the interview Ms Balmer entered the room, introduced herself and explained to the broker that he had been filmed. The broker said that he had suspected as much, and refused to comment when invited to do so by the editor. On 25 March 2003 sequences from the recording were broadcast on the "*Kassensturz*" programme, with the broker's face and voice disguised.

On 5 November 2007 Mr Haldimann, Mr Utz and Ms Balmer were convicted of having made a recording using a hidden camera and given penalties of 15 day-fines of 350 Swiss Francs (CHF), CHF 200 and CHF 100 respectively, while five day-fines of CHF 30 were imposed on Ms Strebel. The applicants appealed to the Federal Court, which ruled that, while acknowledging the major public interest of securing information on practices in the insurance field, which was liable to be weightier than the individual interests at issue, the journalists could have used a different approach less damaging to the broker's private interests. By a judgment of the High Court of the Canton of Zürich of 24 February 2009, the applicants were acquitted of the charge of violating the secret or private domain by means of a film camera, and their penalties were reduced slightly to 12 day-fines for the first three applicants and four day-fines for Ms Strebel.

**Law – Article 10**

The Court reiterated its case-law on attacks on the personal reputations of public figures and the six criteria which it had established in order to weigh freedom of expression against the right to private life: contributing to a debate of general interest, ascertaining how well-known the person being reported on is and the subject of the report/documentary, that person's prior conduct, the method of obtaining the information, the veracity, content, form and repercussions of the report/documentary, and the penalty imposed. The Court applied those criteria to the present case, but took account of its specificity: the person concerned, that is to say the broker, was not a well-known public figure, and the documentary in question had not been geared to criticising him personally but to denouncing specific commercial practices. The Court first of all observed that the subject of the documentary produced, i.e. the low-quality advice offered by private insurance brokers, and therefore the inadequate protection of consumers' rights, was part of a very interesting public debate. The Court secondly noted that, even if the broker might reasonably have believed that the interview was strictly private, the documentary in question had focused not on him personally but on specific commercial practices used within a particular professional category.

The Court further asserted that the applicants deserved the benefit of the doubt in relation to their desire to observe the ethics of journalism as defined by Swiss law, citing the example of their limited use of the hidden camera. The safeguard afforded by Article 10 to journalists in relation to reporting on issues of general interest was subject to the proviso that they were acting in good faith and on an accurate factual basis and provided "reliable and precise" information in accordance with the ethics of journalism. The Court noted in this respect that the veracity of the facts as presented by the applicants had never been contested.

As regards the manner in which the documentary had been broadcast and the broker presented, the Court observed that the recording had been broadcast in the form of a report which was particularly negative in as far as the broker was concerned, using an audio-visual media which was often much more immediate and powerful in effect than the written press. However, a decisive factor was that the applicants had disguised the broker's face and voice and that the interview had not taken place on his usual business premises.

The Court thus held that the interference in the private life of the broker, who had decided against expressing an opinion on the interview, had not been serious enough to override the public interest in receiving information on the alleged malpractice in the field of insurance brokerage.

Lastly, the Court considered that despite the relative leniency of the penalties of 12 day-fines and four day-fines respectively, the criminal court sentence had been liable to discourage the media from expressing criticism, even though the applicants had not been prevented from broadcasting their documentary.

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 10.

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

Since the applicants had not submitted any claim for just satisfaction, the Court considered that there was no need to grant any compensation on this count.

**79. Eur. Court of HR. Case of Zaichenko v. Ukraine, judgment of 26 February 2015, application no. 45797/09.. The applicant complained about his involuntary psychiatric confinement and the unlawful collection of information about him by the police in that context. The Court concluded a violation of Article 8.**

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**no. 45797/09  
26.02.2015**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **ZAICHENKO V. UKRAINE (NO.2)**

Collection of information about the applicant by the police without his consent: Alleged violation of Article 8

#### **Basic Facts**

On 23 July 2009 a judge of the Chervonogvardiyskyy District Court of Dnipropetrovsk examined a report by the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Administrative Court of the same date concerning an administrative offence of contempt of court committed by the applicant. According to the report, the applicant had submitted to the latter court numerous applications containing insulting and abusive statements about the judges. The Chervonogvardiyskyy Court, ordered an in-patient forensic psychiatric examination of the applicant with a view to establishing whether he could be held legally accountable. The judge relied on Article 20 of the Code of Administrative Offences and Article 21 of the Psychiatric Assistance Act. The applicant was taken by the police from the hearing room to the Chervonogvardiyskyy District Police Station, where he was held for about three hours. After that the police handcuffed him and took him to the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Psychiatric Hospital. On the following day, 24 July 2009, the applicant was discharged from the hospital without any documents having been issued concerning his psychiatric condition. On 4 August 2009 the President of the Chervonogvardiyskyy Court instructed the police to collect the information on the applicant's personality required for the Psychiatric Hospital to establish his mental state. The police were instructed, in particular, to collect any documentation relating to psychiatric treatment or drug therapy received by the applicant, plus character references for the applicant from his relatives, neighbours and colleagues.

On 14 August 2009 the Dnipropetrovsk Regional Court of Appeal dismissed the applicant's appeal against the ruling of the Chervonogvardiyskyy Court of 23 July 2009 without examining it. It noted that the contested ruling concerned a procedural issue and was not amenable to appeal. On 8 October 2009 the expert commission delivered its report, according to which, "given the complexity of the case and lack of clarity of the clinical picture", it was impossible to establish a diagnosis and to give an expert conclusion regarding the applicant's psychiatric state. It was therefore recommended that he undergo a repeated examination. On the same date the applicant was discharged from the hospital without having received the expert report. According to him, one of the experts had assured him that he was in good mental health. During the applicant's hospitalisation some money was allegedly stolen from his flat. Furthermore, upon his return home he allegedly discovered a briefcase there containing personal documents belonging to a person unknown to him. The applicant complained to the police about the burglary. On 19 November 2009 the Chervonogvardiyskyy Court ordered, on the basis of the material in the case file, that the applicant undergo another forensic psychiatric examination. The applicant unsuccessfully attempted to challenge that decision on appeal. It is not known whether the examination took place or what conclusions it reached. On 16 December 2009 a criminal investigation was begun into the applicant's allegation of burglary. Its outcome is unknown. On 29 July 2010 the Chervonogvardiyskyy Court found the applicant guilty of contempt of court on account of a letter he had

written to that court of 20 July 2010 containing what the court regarded as insulting, indecent and abusive statements. The applicant was sentenced to fifteen days' administrative detention, which was to be calculated from 29 July 2010. As noted in the ruling, it could be challenged on appeal. It is not known whether the applicant appealed or whether he served the detention.

## **Law- Article 8**

The Court has held in its case-law that the collection and storage of information relating to an individual's private life or the release of such information come within the scope of Article 8 § 1. The Court further reiterates that the wording "in accordance with the law" requires the impugned measure both to have some basis in domestic law and to be compatible with the rule of law, which is expressly mentioned in the preamble to the Convention and inherent in the object and purpose of Article 8. The Court is mindful of the criticism of that provision by the Constitutional Court, which concerned the insufficient statutory regulation of the collection, storage, use and dissemination of information about individuals, in particular, about their mental state, as well as the absence of any procedures for the protection of individuals' rights against the unlawful interference of psychiatric services in their private life. The above considerations were sufficient for the Court to conclude that the impugned interference in the applicant's private life was unlawful. The Court therefore finds that there has been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention in this regard.

**Conclusion:** violation (unanimously)

**80. Eur. Court of HR. Case of M.N. and Others v. San Marino, judgement of 7 July 2015, application no. 28005/12. The applicants complained about the decision ordering the seizure of banking documents relating to them, alleging that they did not have effective access to court to complain about it and that it interfered with their private life and correspondence.**

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**no. 28005/12**  
**7.07.2015**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **M.N. AND OTHERS V. SAN MARINO**

Banking data, irrespective of whether it contains sensitive information, is protected under the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicants, S.G, M.N, C.R., and I.R., are Italian nationals who live in Italy. In the context of criminal proceedings in Italy in 2009 against several people (not including the applicants) on suspicion of a number of offences – including conspiracy, money laundering, embezzlement, tax evasion and fraud – the Italian prosecutors asked the San Marino authorities for assistance. Following that request, the San Marino first-instance tribunal issued a search and seizure decision in respect of all banks, fiduciary institutions and trust companies in San Marino.

Banking data relating to the applicants were thus seized and copied in the course of the operation. The applicants were notified about the measure applied to them about one year after the adoption of the search and seizure decision. The applicants then lodged a complaint before the judge of criminal

appeals against the decision to seize documents related to them. In February and June 2011, respectively, that judge declared their complaints inadmissible, as the applicants had no standing to institute such proceedings, and noting that any breach of the rights of a person concerned by the investigation as a result of the execution of the relevant court decision had to be raised before the Italian courts. The applicants' appeals against that decision before the third-instance judge were rejected on different dates in 2011.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court declared the complaints of S.G, C.R., and I.R. inadmissible for non-exhaustion of domestic remedies and/or non-compliance with the six-month rule, which allows the Court to only consider matters within a period of six months from the final decision at national level.

The Court decided to examine the complaints of the remaining applicant, M.N., solely under Article 8 of the Convention, first of all dismissing the Government's argument that Article 8 was not applicable in the circumstances of the case as, in their view, the case-law to-date did not protect the confidentiality of materials relating to banking and fiduciary relationships.

The Government notably argued that no searches had taken place in M.N.'s home or work place and that the documents in question, which had simply been submitted, copied for information purposes and returned, were not personal or of an intimate nature.

The Court, on the other hand, considered that there was no doubt that banking documents amounted to personal data concerning an individual, irrespective of whether or not they contained sensitive information. Such information could also concern professional dealings and there was no reason to justify excluding activities of a professional or business nature from the notion of "private life". In addition, the right to respect for one's correspondence was also engaged since the seizure: order had covered letters and e-mails exchanged between M.N. and third parties, which had been in the bank's possession. The Court recalled in that connection that Article 8 protected the confidentiality of all exchanges between individuals for the purposes of communication. Moreover, it was of no consequence that the original documents remained with the bank. The copying and subsequent storage of information retrieved from bank statements, cheques, fiduciary dispositions and e-mails had therefore amounted to an interference with both M.N.'s "private life" and "correspondence".

That interference had been prescribed by law, namely Article 29 of the Bilateral Convention on Friendship and Good Neighbourhood between Italy and San Marino of 1939 and the relevant laws which provided for an exception to the right of banking secrecy in the context of criminal proceedings, and pursued the legitimate aims of, among other things, prevention of crime and the economic well-being of the country.

However, the Court found that there had been a lack of procedural safeguards to contest the interference with M.N.'s "private life" and "correspondence", notably the fact that he had had no means available to him under national law to challenge the measure to which he had been subjected. Given that M.N. had not been charged with any financial wrongdoing, nor was he the owner of the banking institutes, he had no standing under San Marino law to contest the seizure and copying for storage purposes of his banking data. Indeed M.N., who was not an accused person in the original criminal procedure, had been at a significant disadvantage as compared to the accused in those proceedings or to the possessor of the banking or fiduciary institutes, all of whom had been entitled to challenge the search and seizure decision. As a result, M.N. had not enjoyed the effective protection of national law.

On that account M.N., not being an "interested person" within the meaning of the domestic law as interpreted by the domestic courts, had been denied the "effective control" to which citizens were entitled

under the rule of law and which would have restricted the interference in question to what had been "necessary in a democratic society". The Court therefore held that there had been a violation of Article 8 in respect of M.N. Given that finding, the Court held that there was no need to examine M.N.'s further complaint under Article 6 § 1 about being denied access to court concerning the constitutional legitimacy of the interpretation given to the law.

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that San Marino was to pay M.N. 3,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 15,000 for costs and expenses.

**81. *Eur. Court of HR. Case of Sõro v. Estonia*, judgment of 3 September 2015, application no. 22588/08. The applicant alleged that the publication, thirteen years after the restoration of Estonian independence, of information about his service in the former State security organisations (KGB) had violated his right to respect for his private life. The Court rules that such a passage of time must have decreased any threat the applicant could have initially posed to the new democratic system. The Court concluded that the applicant's right to respect for his private life was subject to a disproportionate interference.**

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**no. 22588/08  
03.09.2015**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **SÕRO v. ESTONIA**

Publication of information about prior employment as driver with former security services: respect for private life

### **Basic Facts**

From 1980 to 1991 Mr Sõro was employed as a driver by the Estonian branch of the Committee for State Security of the USSR (the KGB). In February 2004 the Estonian Internal Security Service presented him with a notice according to which he had been registered under the national legislation on "Disclosure of Persons who Have Served in or Co-operated with Security Organisations or Intelligence or Counterintelligence Organisations of Armed Forces of States which Have Occupied Estonia" ("the Disclosure Act"). Under the Disclosure Act, which had entered into force in 1995, the persons concerned were to be registered and information about their service or cooperation with the security or intelligence organisations was to be made public unless they had made a confession about it to the Estonian Internal Security Service within a year from the Act's entry into force.

The notice received by Mr Sõro stated that an announcement about his past employment would be published in an appendix to the State Gazette. It stated that the person concerned had the right to have access to the documents proving his or her links to the security or intelligence organisations and to contest that information before the Estonian Internal Security Service or the courts. According to Mr Sõro, his request to be shown the material gathered in respect of him was not met.

The Estonian Government contested that allegation. In June 2004 the announcement about Mr Sõro's having worked for the Committee for State Security as a driver was published in the appendix to the State Gazette, both in its printed version and on the Internet. He subsequently complained to the Chancellor of Justice, who, in a report to Parliament, concluded that the Disclosure Act was

unconstitutional, in particular because information on all employees of the security and intelligence organisations was made public irrespective of whether they had merely performed technical tasks not related to the main functions of the organisations. However, the Parliament's constitutional law committee disagreed with this assessment and the Chancellor of Justice did not bring constitutional review proceedings.

In 2006, Mr Sõro lodged a complaint before the administrative court, asking for the text published in the Gazette to be declared unlawful and, in particular, to delete the word "occupier" (in the reference to States having occupied Estonia). He noted in particular that he had never been accused of or provided with any evidence showing that he had participated in the forceful occupation of the Estonian territory. He asserted that he had only worked for the Committee for State Security as a driver and did not know anything about gathering information. Moreover, as a result of the publication of the announcement he had lost his work and he had been a victim of groundless accusations by other people. The administrative court dismissed his complaint, noting in particular that he had failed to contest the notice with which he had been presented. That decision was upheld by the appeal court and, in February 2008, the Supreme Court declined to hear Mr Sõro's appeal.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court considered that the publication of information about Mr Sõro's employment as a driver of the KGB had affected his reputation and therefore constituted an interference with his right to respect for his private life. The lawfulness of that interference – which had been based on the Disclosure Act – was not in dispute between the parties. The Court also considered that the interference had pursued a legitimate aim for the purpose of Article 8, namely the protection of national security and public safety, the prevention of disorder and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

As regards the question of whether the measure had been proportionate to the aims pursued, the Court observed that in a number of previous cases against other countries concerning similar measures it had criticised the lack of individualisation of those measures. Such considerations also applied in Mr Sõro's case. The Court noted that the Disclosure Act did not make any distinction between different levels of past involvement with the KGB. It was true that under the applicable procedure Mr Sõro had been informed beforehand of the text of the announcement to be published, and given the possibility to contest the factual information it contained. However, there was no procedure to evaluate the specific tasks performed by individual employees of the former security services in order to assess the danger they could possibly pose several years after the end of their career in those institutions. The Court was not convinced that there was a reasonable link between the legitimate aims sought by the Act and the publication of information about all employees of the former security services, including drivers, as in Mr Sõro's case, regardless of the specific function they had performed in those services.

Furthermore, while the Disclosure Act had come into force three and a half years after Estonia had declared its independence, publication of information about former employees of the security services had stretched over several years. In Mr Sõro's case, the information in question had only been published in 2004, almost 13 years after Estonia had declared its independence. The Court considered that any threat which the former servicemen of the KGB could initially have posed to the new democracy must have considerably decreased with time. There had been no assessment of the possible threat posed by Mr Sõro at the time the announcement was published.

Finally, although the Disclosure Act itself did not impose any restrictions on Mr Sõro's employment, according to his submissions he had been derided by his colleagues and had been forced to quit his job. The Court considered that even if such a result was not sought by the Act it nevertheless testified to how serious the interference with Mr Sõro's right to respect for his private life had been. In the light

of those considerations the Court concluded that this interference had been disproportionate to the aims pursued

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that Estonia was to pay Mr Sõro 6,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 1,444.74 in respect of costs and expenses.

### **Separate opinions**

Judge Pinto de Albuquerque expressed a concurring opinion; Judges Hajiyev, Laffranque and Dedov expressed a joint dissenting opinion. These opinions are annexed to the judgment.

**82. Eur. Court of HR. *Bremner v. Turkey*, judgment of 13 October 2015, application no. 37428/06. Television broadcast showing non-blurred images of an individual obtained using a hidden camera while meeting someone to offer free Christian literature wasn't justified by general-interest. The State overpassed its margin of appreciation and violated Article 8.**

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**no. 37428/06**  
**13.10.15**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **BREMNER v. TURKEY**

Television broadcast showing non-blurred image of an individual obtained using a hidden camera entailed a violation of his privacy

### **Basic Facts**

Mr Bremner, who was a correspondent for an Australian newspaper at the relevant time, also worked for a Christian bookshop. On 24 June 1997 he appeared in a television documentary which, according to its presenter, concerned covert activities conducted in Turkey by “foreign pedlars of religion”.

A meeting was filmed using a hidden camera in a restaurant in the presence of Mr Bremner, A.N. and a group of friends of the latter who supposedly wished to learn more about Christianity. A second meeting took place in a flat and was also filmed using a hidden camera. The programme’s presenter then entered the room with a camera and a microphone. She claimed to have heard about the meeting and wanted to join in and interview Mr Bremner about his activities. She asked him why he was promoting his Christian beliefs on a voluntary basis and covertly. Mr Bremner replied that his activity was not covert, but that he had responded to an invitation from A.N.

According to Mr Bremner, the programme’s presenter was accompanied by police officers who took him into police custody after the discussion and he was released the next day after giving a statement.

On 25 June 1997 the public prosecutor brought proceedings against Mr Bremner for insulting God and Islam. On 28 April 1998 the criminal court found him innocent, taking the view that no offence had been made out.

Mr Bremner sued the presenter and producers of the programme, claiming damages. His claim was dismissed by the District Court on the ground that there had been an interest in informing the public. The Court of Cassation quashed that judgment, noting that the dispute concerned a conflict between freedom of expression on the one hand and personality rights on the other. It observed that freedom of the press was not unlimited. It took the view that Mr Bremner had not committed any illegal act, that he had simply exercised his rights to freedom of expression and freedom of conscience. His right to respect for his private life had been doubly breached, first at the time of the filming with a hidden camera and secondly when the documentary was broadcast with expressions such as “pedlar of religion” or “bigotry”.

After the case had been referred back to it, the District Court decided not to follow the Court of Cassation’s reasoning and upheld the initial judgment. The case was then automatically referred to the plenary civil divisions of the Court of Cassation, which endorsed the initial judgment by 35 votes to 11. The judges took the view that the footage in question did not concern details of Mr Bremner’s private life but was part of a documentary on a topical issue of interest to public opinion.

Mr Bremner also claimed that he had subsequently been forced by his landlord to leave the flat that he had been renting, allegedly on security grounds, and that he had ultimately been removed by the authorities to Bulgaria.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court observed that the documentary concerned religious proselytising, which was undeniably a matter of general interest. It noted that the programme had been critical and that offensive terms such as “pedlar of religion” had been used. It found that this expression was a value judgment and, as such, was not susceptible of proof. The Court found, however, that the documentary did not contain any gratuitous personal attacks and did not amount to hate speech.

As regards the method used, the Court was of the view that a technique as intrusive and as damaging to private life must in principle be used restrictively. The Court was not unaware that, in certain cases, the use of hidden cameras might prove necessary for journalists when information was difficult to obtain by any other means. However, that tool had to be used in compliance with ethical principles and with restraint.

As regards the balance between the right to freedom of expression on the one hand and the right to respect for private life on the other, the Court observed that Mr Bremner had not placed himself in the public arena except for the fact that he had published an advertisement, which could not have led him to suspect that he might be the subject of public criticism. He thought that he was merely meeting a group of individuals interested in Christianity.

As to the contribution allegedly made by the broadcasting of Mr Bremner’s image to a debate in the general interest, the Court did not find any general-interest justification for the journalists’ decision to broadcast his image without blurring it. In view of the fact that Mr Bremner was not famous, there was nothing to suggest that the broadcasting of his image would be newsworthy or useful.

In addition, the Court noted that none of the domestic courts seemed to have assessed the degree of contribution of the broadcasting of Mr Bremner’s image, without blurring it, to a debate in the general interest. The Court took the view that the Turkish authorities had not struck a fair balance between the competing interests. The manner in which they had dealt with the case had not afforded Mr Bremner adequate and effective protection of his right to his own image and therefore to respect for his private life.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**Law – Articles 6, 9 and 10**

The Court found Mr Bremner’s complaints inadmissible under Articles 6 and 10, and his Article 9 complaint was inadmissible for failure to exhaust domestic remedies.

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that Turkey was to pay the applicant 7,500 euros in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**83. *Eur. Court of HR. R.E v. United Kingdom*, judgment of 27 October 2015, application no. 62498/11. Covert surveillance of a detainee’s consultations with his lawyer violates Article 8 since these consultations benefit from a strengthened protection. However, consultations with the person appointed to assist the detainee, as a vulnerable person, following his arrest do not benefit from this protection; Article 8 is not violated on this grievance.**

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**no. 62498/11  
27.10.15**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**R.E v. UNITED KINGDOM**

Legal safeguards regarding covert surveillance of a detainee’s consultations with his lawyer were insufficient at the time of his custody

**Basic Facts**

The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Covert Surveillance Code of Practice permits, in certain circumstances, the covert surveillance between detainees and their legal advisor, their medical advisor and, in the case of vulnerable detainees, their “appropriate adult”.

Between 15 March 2009 and 8 May 2010 Mr R.E. was arrested and detained on three occasions in connection with the murder of a police officer believed to have been killed by dissident Republicans. During the first two detentions his solicitor received assurances from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) that his consultations with Mr R.E. would not be subject to covert surveillance. Mr R.E. was arrested for the third time on 4 May 2010. On this occasion, the PSNI refused to give an assurance to Mr R.E.’s solicitor that their consultations would not be subject to covert surveillance.

Mr R.E. sought permission to apply for judicial review of this decision. In particular, he alleged that the grounds upon which the authorisation of such surveillance would be appropriate were not sufficiently clearly defined and that the guidance concerning the securing and destruction of legally privileged information was not sufficiently clear or precise. On 6 May 2010 he was granted permission to apply for judicial review and the court directed that any subsequent consultations with his solicitor and his medical advisor should not be subject to covert surveillance. Mr R.E. was released without charge on 8 May 2010.

Mr R.E.’s application for judicial review was dismissed in September 2010. The court held that RIPA and the Covert Surveillance Code of Conduct were clearly defined and sufficiently detailed and precise. The Supreme Court refused Mr. R.E.’s application for permission to appeal in April 2011.

## **Law – Article 8 (concerning legal consultations)**

The Court reiterated the reasoning in its judgment in the case of *Kennedy v. the United Kingdom* concerning interception of communications. In that judgment the Court held that the domestic law provisions (part I of RIPA) covering the nature of the offences which could give rise to interception, the categories of persons liable to be the subject of interception and the provisions dealing with duration, renewal and cancellation of interception measures had been sufficiently clear.

The Government argued that Mr R.E.'s case should be distinguished from the *Kennedy* case on the ground that the covert surveillance had been less intrusive than the interception of communications and that therefore the required level of safeguards should be less strict.

However, the Court considered that the surveillance of a legal consultation constituted an extremely high degree of intrusion into a person's right to respect for his or her private life and correspondence and consequently the same stringent safeguards should be in place to protect individuals from arbitrary interference with their Article 8 rights as in the case of interception of communications, such as a telephone call between a lawyer and a client.

The Court noted that, as in the *Kennedy* case, the domestic provisions with regard to covert surveillance (Part II of RIPA) had been sufficiently clear in terms of the nature of the offences which could give rise to such measures, the categories of persons liable to be the subject of surveillance and the provisions dealing with duration, renewal and cancellation of surveillance measures. Furthermore, guidelines to ensure that arrangements were in place for the secure handling, storage and destruction of material obtained through covert surveillance had been implemented by the Northern Ireland Police Service on 22 June 2010.

However, at the time of Mr. R.E.'s detention in May 2010, those guidelines were not yet in force. The Court was not therefore satisfied that the relevant domestic law provisions in place at the time provided sufficient safeguards for the protection of material obtained by covert surveillance, notably as concerned the examination, use and storage of the material obtained, the precautions to be taken when communicating the material to other parties, and the circumstances in which recordings could or had to be erased or the material destroyed.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8 as concerned Mr R.E.'s complaint about the covert surveillance of his legal consultations.

## **Article 8 (concerning consultations between detainees and their “appropriate adults”)**

As concerned the surveillance of “appropriate adult”-detainee consultations, the Court held that, unlike legal consultations, they were not subject to legal privilege and therefore a detainee would not have the same expectation of privacy. The Court was satisfied that the relevant domestic provisions, insofar as they related to the possible surveillance of consultations between detainees and “appropriate adults”, were accompanied by “adequate safeguards against abuse”, notably as concerned the authorisation, review and record keeping.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8 with regard to this part of Mr R.E.'s complaint.

## **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that the United Kingdom was to pay Mr R.E. EUR 1,500 in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 15,000 in respect of costs and expenses.

**84. Eur. Court of HR, Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova v. Portugal, judgment of 1 December 2015, application no. 69436/10. The case concerned access to the bank accounts of a lawyer charged with tax fraud. The Court found that consultation of the lawyer's bank statements had amounted to an interference with her right to respect for professional confidentiality, which fell within the scope of private life.**

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**no. 69436/10  
01.12.2015**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **BRITO FERRINHO BEXIGA VILLA-NOVA V. PORTUGAL**

Tax authorities' consultation of lawyer's bank accounts amounted to an interference with her right to respect for private life

#### **Basic Facts**

While inspecting the accounts of Ms De Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova's law firm, the tax authorities noted that she had not paid value-added tax on fees collected in 2005 and 2006 which had been paid into her personal bank account. The tax authorities accordingly asked her to produce her personal bank statements, which she refused to do on grounds of professional confidentiality and bank secrecy. The prosecutor's office attached to the Faro Court opened an investigation for tax fraud. On 18 September 2009 Ms Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova was charged.

In an application of 30 October 2009, the prosecuting authorities requested the criminal investigating judge to lodge an interlocutory application for professional confidentiality to be lifted. In an order of 6 November 2009, the investigating judge requested the Evora Court of Appeal to authorise the lifting of professional confidentiality and bank secrecy. He observed that professional confidentiality was not absolute and could not preclude the overarching principles of administration of justice and certainty of the material truth. On 12 January 2010 the Court of Appeal ordered the lifting of professional confidentiality and bank secrecy on the grounds that the public interest should prevail over private interests. Ms Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova appealed. The Supreme Court declared her appeal inadmissible.

In an order of 29 July 2011, the prosecutor's office attached to the Faro Court discontinued the criminal proceedings instituted against the applicant for tax fraud.

#### **Law – Articles 6, 8 and 13**

The Court held that the consultation of Ms Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova's bank statements had constituted an interference with her right to respect for professional confidentiality, which fell within the scope of private life. That interference had had a legal basis (Article 135 of the Code of Criminal Procedure) and pursued a legitimate aim, namely, the prevention of crime within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention.

The Court observed that the proceedings for lifting the professional confidentiality binding on Ms Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova in her capacity as a lawyer had admittedly been conducted before a judicial body, but without the applicant's participation. Ms Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova had not become

aware that professional confidentiality and bank secrecy had been lifted with regard to her bank statements until she had been served with the Evora Court of Appeal's judgment of 12 January 2010. She had not therefore been involved in the proceedings at any time and had thus been unable to submit her arguments.

The Court observed that domestic law contained a provision that the Lawyers Association had to be consulted in proceedings to have professional confidentiality lifted. In the present case, however, the Lawyers Association had clearly not been consulted. Even if, under the domestic law, an opinion from the Lawyers Association would not have been binding, the Court considered that an opinion from an independent body should have been sought in the present case because the information requested had been covered by professional confidentiality.

With regard to an "effective control" to challenge the disputed measure, the Court noted that Ms Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova's appeal to the Supreme Court challenging the Evora Court of Appeal's decision had not been examined on the merits as the Supreme Court had considered that the applicant did not have any possibility of appealing against that judgment. The Court found that the simple fact that the applicant's appeal was declared inadmissible by the Supreme Court did not satisfy the requirement of an "effective control" laid down in Article 8 of the Convention. Accordingly, Ms Brito Ferrinho Bexiga Villa-Nova had not had any remedy by which to challenge the measure complained of.

Having regard to the lack of procedural guarantees and effective judicial control of the measure complained of, the Court considered that the Portuguese authorities had failed to strike a fair balance in the present case between the demands of the general interest and the requirements of the protection of the applicant's right to respect for her private life. Accordingly, there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that Portugal was to pay the applicant 3,250 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 463.98 in respect of costs and expenses.

**85. Eur. Court of HR, G.S.B. v. Switzerland, judgment of 22 December 2015, application no. 28601/11. The case concerned the transmission to the US tax authorities of the applicant's bank account details in connection with an administrative cooperation agreement between Switzerland and the USA. The Court noted that the applicant had had access to several effective and genuine procedural safeguards in order to contest the transmission of his bank details and to secure protection against arbitrary implementation of agreements concluded between Switzerland and the US.**

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**no. 28601/11**

**22.12.2015**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **G.S.B. V. SWITZERLAND**

Implementing a mutual assistance agreement in tax matters between Switzerland and the United States did not breach the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

In 2008 the US tax authorities (Internal Revenue Service - IRS) had discovered that thousands of US taxpayers held bank accounts in the Swiss bank UBS SA which had not been declared to their national authorities. Being exposed to a risk of criminal proceedings, UBS concluded an "agreement to suspend criminal prosecution" with the US Justice Department. Proceedings were discontinued in return for the payment of a transaction amount of 780 million US dollars.

On 19 February 2009 the IRS brought civil proceedings to order UBS to hand over the identities of its 52,000 US customers and a number of data on the accounts held by the latter. Switzerland was concerned that the dispute between the US authorities and UBS might give rise to a conflict between Swiss and US law should the IRS obtain that information, and the civil proceedings were therefore suspended pending extra-judicial reconciliation.

With a view to identifying the taxpayers in question, the Government of the Swiss Confederation and the United States concluded an agreement entitled "Agreement 09".

On 31 August 2009 the IRS sent the Federal tax authority (AFC) a request for administrative cooperation with a view to obtaining information on the US taxpayers who had been authorised to open bank accounts with UBS.

On 1 September 2009 the AFC decided to instigate an administrative cooperation procedure and invited the bank UBS to supply detailed files on the customers mentioned in the appendix to Convention 09. By judgment of 21 January 2010 the Federal Administrative Court allowed an appeal against an AFC decision, resulting in the invalidation of all decisions issued by the AFC on the basis of Convention 09. The entry into force of that judgment called into question the implementation of Convention 09. In order to avoid such a situation, on 31 March 2010, following fresh negotiations with the United States, the Federal Council concluded a "Protocol modifying the Agreement between Switzerland and the United States" known as "Protocol 10". The provisions of that Protocol were incorporated into Agreement 09, and the consolidated version of Agreement 09 as amended by the Protocol 10 is referred to as "Convention 10".

On 19 January 2010 UBS transmitted the applicant's file to the AFC. In its final decision of 7 June 2010, the AFC stated that all the conditions had been met for affording administrative cooperation to the IRS and for ordering the requested documents to be handed over to the latter. On 8 December 2010 the applicant appealed to the Federal Administrative Court against that decision. The latter Court set aside the 7 June 2010 decision, finding that the applicant's right to be heard had not been respected. It referred the case back to the AFC. In its final decision of 4 November 2010, the AFC held that all the conditions had been met for affording administrative cooperation to the IRS and for ordering UBS to forward the requested documents. The applicant appealed to the Federal Administrative Court, which, adjudicating at last instance, found that Convention 10 was binding upon the Swiss authorities, which did not have to verify the conformity of that text to Federal law of previous conventions. The Federal Administrative Court dismissed the applicant's appeal.

On 24 March 2011 the applicant lodged a public-law appeal with the Federal Court on the ground that the considerations set out in the impugned judgment were relevant to criminal-law cooperation but not to administrative cooperation. The Federal Court declared that appeal inadmissible, with reference to a previous judgment to the effect that appeals against decisions which the AFC had given in pursuance of agreements concluded with the US did indeed relate to administrative cooperation.

On 14 December 2012 the applicant's bank account details were transmitted to the US tax authorities.

## **Law – Article 8**

As regards the legal basis for the measure, the Court reiterated that Agreement 09 and Protocol 10 had been negotiated and concluded by the Federal Council, approved by the Federal Parliament and then ratified by the Government in accordance with the procedure for concluding treaties set out in constitutional law. Inasmuch as the applicant submitted that the AFC's decision of 1 September 2009 lacked any basis in law because Parliament had not yet approved Agreement 09 at the time, the Court agreed with the Government that the AFC had only taken the decision so that it could assess whether the conditions for affording cooperation had been met. At all events, the immediate implementation of Agreement 09 on a provisional basis had been confirmed by the Government at the time of its approval, and that of Protocol 10 had been confirmed by the Federal Parliament on 17 June 2010.

As regards the foreseeability of the impugned measure, the Court reiterated that the European Convention of Human Rights should be interpreted in line with the general principles of international law. Indeed, under the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties regard should be had to "any relevant rules of international law applicable in the relations between the parties". In the present case the Court considered relevant the Federal Court's and the Government's argument that Article 28 of the Vienna Convention allows the parties to an international treaty to go against the principle of non-retroactivity and provide for the consideration of acts or facts which occurred before the treaty in question entered into force.

In the present case the Federal Court had settled case-law to the effect that provisions on administrative and criminal-law cooperation requiring third parties to provide specific information were procedural in nature and consequently applied, in principle, to all present or future proceedings, including those relating to tax periods predating their adoption. The applicant, assisted by a lawyer, could not reasonably have been unaware of that judicial practice. He therefore could not validly submit to the Court that the interference had occurred in a manner which he could not have foreseen. The impugned measure could therefore be regarded as being "prescribed by law".

As regards the legitimacy of the aim pursued by the measure, in the knowledge that the banking sector is an economic branch of great importance to Switzerland, the Court held that the impugned measure formed part of an all-out effort by the Swiss Government to settle the conflict between the bank UBS

and the US tax authorities. The measure might validly be considered as conducive to protecting the country's economic well-being. The Court accepted the Government's argument that the US tax authorities' allegations against Swiss banks were liable to jeopardise the very survival of UBS, a major player in the Swiss economy employing a large number of persons. Therefore, given Switzerland's interest in finding an effective legal solution in cooperation with the US, it had pursued a legitimate aim within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention.

As regards whether the measure had been "necessary in a democratic society", the Court noted that the Federal Administrative Court had ruled that the conditions set out in Article 8 for any interference with private or family life had been met in the instant case. The major economic interests at stake for the country and the Swiss interest in being able to honour its international undertakings had taken precedence over the individual interests of the persons concerned by the measure.

With particular regard to the applicant's situation, it should be noted that only his bank account details, that is to say purely financial information, had been disclosed. No private details or data closely linked to his identity, which would have deserved enhanced protection, had been transmitted. His bank details had been forwarded to the relevant US authorities so that they could use standard procedures to ascertain whether the applicant had in fact honoured his tax obligations, and if not, to take the requisite legal action.

Finally, the Court observed that the applicant had benefited from various procedural safeguards. He had been able to lodge an appeal with the Federal Administrative Court against the AFC's 7 June 2010 decision. The latter court had subsequently set aside the said decision on the grounds of violation of the applicant's right to a hearing. The AFC had invited the applicant to transmit any comments he might have, of which right the applicant had availed himself. On 4 November 2010 the AFC had given a fresh decision finding that all the conditions had been met for affording administrative cooperation. The applicant had subsequently lodged a second appeal with the Federal Administrative Court, which dismissed it. The applicant had consequently benefited from several effective and genuine procedural guarantees to challenge the disclosure of his bank details and obtain protection against the arbitrary implementation of agreements concluded between Switzerland and the United States.

It follows that there had been no violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

#### **Article 14 in conjunction with Article 8**

The Court found, essentially on the same grounds as those mentioned above in support of the absence of violation of Article 8, that the applicant had not suffered discriminatory treatment for the purposes of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 8. It added that the applicant had provided no evidence to permit an assessment of whether his treatment would have been any different in another Swiss bank.

Therefore, there had been no violation of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 8 of the Convention.

**86. Eur. Court of HR. Roman Zakharov v. Russia, judgment of 4 December 2015, application no. 47143/06. The applicant is a user of mobile phone complaining of system of secret surveillance without effective domestic remedies. Although the applicant cannot prove that his own conversations have been surveyed, the mere existence of the legislation allowing it restricts the liberty of communicating. The Court concluded that domestic legal provisions governing the interception of communications did not provide adequate and effective guarantees and thus violate Article 8**

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**no. 47143/06**

**04.12.15**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **ROMAN ZAKHAROV v. RUSSIA**

Arbitrary and abusive secret surveillance of mobile telephone communications in Russia

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Roman Zakharov, is the editor-in-chief of a publishing company and subscribed to the services of several mobile network operators. In December 2003 Mr Zakharov brought judicial proceedings against three mobile network operators, the Ministry of Communications, and the Department of the Federal Security Service for St Petersburg and the Leningrad Region, complaining about interference with his right to privacy of his telephone communications. He maintained that, under the relevant national law – namely, the Operational-Search Activities Act of 1995 (the OSSA), the Code of Criminal Procedure of 2001 (the CCrP) and, more specifically, Order no. 70 issued by the Ministry of Communications which requires telecommunications networks to install equipment enabling law-enforcement agencies to carry out operational-search activities – the mobile operators had permitted unrestricted interception of all telephone communications by the security services without prior judicial authorisation. He asked the district court in charge to issue an injunction to remove the equipment installed under Order no. 70, and to ensure that access to telecommunications was given to authorised persons only.

The Russian courts rejected Mr Zakharov's claim. In a judgment upheld in April 2006, the district court found, in particular, that he had failed to prove that his telephone conversations had been intercepted or that the mobile operators had transmitted protected information to unauthorized persons. Installation of the equipment to which he referred did not in itself infringe the privacy of his communications.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court found that Mr Zakharov was entitled to claim to be a victim of a violation of the European Convention, even though he was unable to allege that he had been the subject of a concrete measure of surveillance. Given the secret nature of the surveillance measures provided for by the legislation, their broad scope (affecting all users of mobile telephone communications) and the lack of effective means to challenge them at national level (see point 6 below), the Court considered that it was justified to examine the relevant legislation not from the point of view of a specific instance of surveillance, but in the abstract. Furthermore, the Court considered that Mr Zakharov did not have to prove that he was even at risk of having his communications intercepted. Indeed, given that the domestic system did not afford an effective remedy to the person who suspected that he or she was subjected to secret

surveillance, the very existence of the contested legislation amounted in itself to an interference with Mr Zakharov's rights under Article 8.

It was not in dispute between the parties that interception of mobile telephone communications had had a basis in Russian law, namely the OSAA, the CCrP, the Communications Act and Orders issued by the Ministry of Communications (in particular Order no. 70), and pursued the legitimate aims of the protection of national security and public safety, the prevention of crime and the protection of the economic well-being of the country.

However, the Court concluded that the Russian legal provisions governing interception of communications did not provide for adequate and effective guarantees against arbitrariness and the risk of abuse.

In particular, the Court found shortcomings in the legal framework in the following areas:

**1. The circumstances in which public authorities are empowered to resort to secret surveillance measures**

Notably, Russian legislation lacks clarity concerning some of the categories of people liable to have their telephones tapped, namely a person who may have information about an offence or information relevant to a criminal case or those involved in activities endangering Russia's national, military, economic or ecological security. For example, as concerns the latter category, the OSAA leaves the authorities an almost unlimited degree of discretion in determining which events or acts constitute such a threat and whether that threat is serious enough to justify secret surveillance;

**2. The duration of secret surveillance measures**

Notably the provisions on the circumstances in which secret surveillance measures must be discontinued do not provide sufficient guarantees against arbitrary interference. Regrettably, the requirement to discontinue interception when no longer necessary is only mentioned in the CCrP and not in the OSAA. This means in practice that interception of communications in criminal proceedings have more safeguards than interceptions in connection with activities endangering Russia's national, military, economic or ecological security;

**3. The procedures for destroying and storing intercepted data**

In particular, the domestic law permits automatic storage for six months of clearly irrelevant data in cases where the person concerned has not been charged with a criminal offence and, in cases where the person has been charged with a criminal offence, it is not sufficiently clear as to the circumstances in which the intercepted material will be stored and destroyed after the end of a trial;

**4. The procedures for authorising interception**

The authorisation procedures are not capable of ensuring that secret surveillance measures are ordered only when necessary. Most notably, Russian courts do not verify whether there is a reasonable suspicion against the person for whom interception has been requested or examine whether the interception is necessary and justified. Thus, interception requests are often not accompanied by any supporting materials, judges never request the interception agency to submit such materials and a mere reference to the existence of information about a criminal offence or activities endangering national, military, economic or ecological security is considered to be sufficient for the interception to be authorised.

Furthermore, the OSAA does not contain any requirements concerning the content either of the request for interception or of the interception authorisation, meaning that courts sometimes grant interception authorisations which do not mention a specific person or telephone number to be tapped, but authorise interception of all telephone communications in the area where a criminal offence has allegedly been committed, and on occasions without mentioning the duration of the authorised interception. Furthermore, the non-judicial urgent procedure provided by the OSAA (under which it is possible to intercept communications without prior judicial authorisation for up to 48 hours) lacks sufficient safeguards to ensure that it is used sparingly and only in duly justified cases.

Moreover, a system, such as the Russian one, which allows the secret services and the police to intercept directly the communications of each and every citizen without having to show an interception authorisation to the communications service provider, or to anyone else, is particularly prone to abuse. This system results in particular in the secret services and the police having the technical means to circumvent the authorisation procedure and intercept communications without obtaining prior judicial authorisation. The need for safeguards against arbitrariness and abuse appears therefore to be particularly great in this area;

## **5. The supervision of interception**

As it is currently organised, supervision of interception does not comply with the requirements under the European Convention that supervisory bodies be independent, open to public scrutiny and vested with sufficient powers and competence to exercise effective and continuous control. Firstly, it is impossible for the supervising authority in Russia to discover interception carried out without proper judicial authorisation as Order no. 70 prohibits the logging or recording of such interception. Secondly, supervision of interception carried out on the basis of proper judicial authorisations is entrusted to the President, Parliament and the Government, who are given no indication under Russian law as to how they may supervise interception, as well as the competent prosecutors, whose manner of appointment and blending of functions, with the same prosecutor's office giving approval to requests for interceptions and then supervising their implementation, may raise doubts as to their independence. Thirdly, the prosecutors' powers and competences are limited: notably, information about the security services' undercover agents and their tactics, methods and means remain outside their scope of supervision. Fourthly, supervision by prosecutors is not open to public scrutiny: their semi-annual reports on operational search measures are not published or otherwise accessible to the public. Lastly, the effectiveness of supervision by prosecutors in practice is open to doubt, Mr Zakharov having submitted documents illustrating prosecutors' inability to obtain access to classified materials on interception and the Government not having submitted any inspection reports or decisions by prosecutors ordering the taking of measures to stop or remedy a detected breach in law;

## **6. Notification of interception of communications and remedies available**

Any effectiveness of the remedies available to challenge interception of communications is undermined by the fact that they are available only to persons who are able to submit proof of interception. Given that a person whose communications have been intercepted in Russia is not notified at any point and does not have an adequate possibility to request and obtain information about interceptions, unless that information becomes known to him as a result of its use in evidence in eventual criminal proceedings, that burden of proof is virtually impossible to satisfy.

The Court noted that those shortcomings in the legal framework appear to have had an impact on the actual operation of the system of secret surveillance which exists in Russia. The Court was not convinced by the Government's argument that all interceptions in Russia were performed lawfully on

the basis of a proper judicial authorisation. The examples submitted by Mr Zakharov in the domestic proceedings<sup>3</sup> and in the proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights<sup>4</sup> indicated the existence of arbitrary and abusive surveillance practices, which were apparently due to the inadequate safeguards provided by law.

In view of those shortcomings, the Court found that Russian law did not meet the “quality of law” requirement and was incapable of keeping the interception of communications to what was “necessary in a democratic society”.

### **Conclusion: violation of Article 8**

#### **Law – Other Articles**

Given the findings under Article 8, in particular with regard to the notification of interception of communications and available remedies, the Court held that it was not necessary to examine Mr Zakharov’s complaint under Article 13 separately.

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held, by 16 votes to one, that the finding of a violation constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage sustained by Mr Zakharov. It further held that Russia was to pay Mr Zakharov 40,000 euros (EUR) in respect of costs and expenses.

#### **Separate Opinions**

Judge Ziemele expressed a dissenting opinion and Judge Dedov expressed a concurring opinion which are annexed to the judgment.

**87. *Eur. Court of HR. Szabó and Vissy v. Hungary*, judgment of 12 January 2016, application no. 37138/14. The Court recognised that situations of extreme urgency in the fight against terrorism could arise in which a requirement for prior judicial control would run the risk of losing precious time. However, judges must be able to control surveillance measures post factum. The Court decided that the domestic law did not provide an effective judicial-control mechanism and did not provide sufficiently precise, effective and comprehensive safeguards on the ordering, execution and potential redressing of surveillance measures.**

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**no. 37138/14  
12/01/16**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **SZABÓ AND VISSY v. HUNGARY**

Hungarian legislation on secret anti-terrorist surveillance does not have sufficient safeguards against abuse

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicants worked for a non-governmental watchdog organisation (Eötvös Károly Közpolitikai Intézet) which voices criticism of the Government.

A specific Anti-Terrorism Task Force was established within the police force as of 1 January 2011. Its competence is defined in section 7/E of Act no. XXXIV of 1994 on the Police, as amended by Act no. CCVII of 2011. Under this legislation, the task force's prerogatives in the field of secret intelligence gathering include secret house search and surveillance with recording, opening of letters and parcels, as well as checking and recording the contents of electronic or computerized communications, all this without the consent of the persons concerned.

In June 2012 the applicants filed a constitutional complaint arguing that the sweeping prerogatives in respect of secret intelligence gathering for national security purposes under section 7/E (3) breached their right to privacy. The Constitutional Court dismissed the majority of the applicants' complaints in November 2013. In one aspect the Constitutional Court agreed with the applicants, namely, it held that the decision of the minister ordering secret intelligence gathering had to be supported by reasons. However, the Constitutional Court held in essence that the scope of national security-related tasks was much broader than the scope of the tasks related to the investigation of particular crimes, thus the differences in legislation between criminal secret surveillance and secret surveillance for national security purposes were not unjustified.

### **Law – Article 8**

Firstly, the Court noted that the Constitutional Court, having examined the applicants' constitutional complaint on the merits, had implicitly acknowledged that they had been personally affected by the legislation in question. In any case, whether or not the applicants – as staff members of a watchdog organisation – belonged to a targeted group, the Court considered that the legislation directly affected all users of communication systems and all homes. Moreover, the domestic law does not apparently provide any possibility for an individual who suspected that their communications were being intercepted to lodge a complaint with an independent body. Considering these two circumstances, the Court was of the view that the applicants could therefore claim to be victims of a violation of their rights under the European Convention. Furthermore, the Court was satisfied that the applicants had exhausted domestic remedies by bringing to the attention of the national authorities – namely the Constitutional Court – the essence of their grievance.

The Court found that there had been an interference with the applicants' right to respect for private and family life as concerned their general complaint about the rules of section 7/E (3) (and not as concerned any actual interception of their communications allegedly taking place). It was not in dispute between the parties that that interference's aim was to safeguard national security and/or to prevent disorder or crime and that it had had a legal basis, namely under the Police Act of 1994 and the National Security Act. Furthermore, the Court was satisfied that the two situations permitting secret surveillance for national security purposes under domestic law, namely the danger of terrorism and rescue operations of Hungarian citizens in distress abroad, were sufficiently clear to give citizens an adequate indication as to the circumstances in which and the conditions on which public authorities were empowered to resort to such measures.

However, the Court was not convinced that the Hungarian legislation on "section 7/E (3) surveillance" provided safeguards which were sufficiently precise, effective and comprehensive in as far as the ordering, execution and potential redressing of such measures were concerned.

Notably, under "section 7/E", it is possible for virtually any person in Hungary to be subjected to secret surveillance as the legislation does not describe the categories of persons who, in practice, may have their communications intercepted. The authorities simply have to identify to the government minister responsible the name of the individual/s or the "range of persons" to be intercepted, without demonstrating their actual or presumed relation to any terrorist threat.

Furthermore, under the legislation, when requesting permission from the Minister of Justice to intercept an individual's communications, the anti-terrorism task force is merely required to argue that the secret intelligence gathering is necessary, without having to provide evidence in support of their request. In particular, such evidence would provide a sufficient factual basis to apply such measures and would enable an evaluation of their necessity based on an individual suspicion regarding the targeted individual. The Court reiterated that any measure of secret surveillance which did not correspond to the criteria of being strictly necessary for the safeguarding of democratic institutions or for the obtaining of vital intelligence in an individual operation would be prone to abuse by authorities with formidable technologies at their disposal.

Another element which could be prone to abuse is the duration of the surveillance. It was not clear from the wording of the law whether the renewal of a surveillance warrant (on expiry of the initial 90 days stipulated under the National Security Act) for a further 90 days was possible only once or repeatedly. Moreover, these stages of authorisation and application of secret surveillance measures lacked judicial supervision. Although the security services are required, when applying for warrants, to outline the necessity of the secret surveillance, this procedure does not guarantee an assessment of whether the measures are strictly necessary, notably in terms of the range of persons and the premises concerned. For the Court, supervision by a politically responsible member of the executive, such as the Minister of Justice, did not provide the necessary guarantees against abuse. External, preferably judicial control of secret surveillance activities offers the best guarantees of independence, impartiality and a proper procedure.

As concerned the procedures for redressing any grievances caused by secret surveillance measures, the Court noted that the executive did have to give account of surveillance operations to a parliamentary committee. However, it could not identify any provisions in Hungarian legislation permitting a remedy granted by this procedure to those who are subjected to secret surveillance but, by necessity, are not informed about it during their application. Nor did the twice yearly general report on the functioning of the secret services presented to this parliamentary committee provide adequate safeguards, as it was apparently unavailable to the public. Moreover, the complaint procedure outlined in the National Security Act also seemed to be of little relevance, since citizens subjected to secret surveillance measures were not informed of the measures applied. Indeed, no notification – of any kind – of secret surveillance measures is foreseen in Hungarian law. The Court reiterated that as soon as notification could be carried out without jeopardising the purpose of the restriction after the termination of the surveillance measure, information should be provided to the persons concerned.

In sum, given that the scope of the measures could include virtually anyone in Hungary, that the ordering was taking place entirely within the realm of the executive and without an assessment of whether interception of communications was strictly necessary, that new technologies enabled the Government to intercept masses of data easily concerning even persons outside the original range of operation, and given the absence of any effective remedial measures, let alone judicial ones, the Court concluded that there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Law – Other Articles**

Given the finding relating to Article 8, the Court considered that it was not necessary to examine the applicants' complaint under Article 6 of the Convention.

Lastly, the Court reiterated that Article 13 could not be interpreted as requiring a remedy against the state of domestic law and therefore found that there had been no violation of Article 13 taken together with Article 8.

## **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held that the finding of a violation constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage sustained by the applicants. It awarded 4,000 for costs and expenses.

## **Separate Opinion**

Judge Pinto de Albuquerque expressed a separate opinion which is annexed to the judgment.

**88. *Eur. Court of HR, Y.Y. v. Russia*, judgment of 23 February 2016, application no. 40378/06. The applicant complained that the St Petersburg Committee for Healthcare had collected and examined her medical records and those of her children and forwarded its report containing the results of its examination, to the Ministry of Healthcare without her consent. The Court found a violation of Article 8 because the actions in dispute did not constitute a foreseeable application of the relevant Russian law.**

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**no. 40378/06  
23.02.2016**

## **Y.Y. v. RUSSIA**

The disclosure of medical data to public bodies without the applicant's consent constitute a violation of the Convention

### **Basic Facts**

In April 2003 the applicant gave birth prematurely to twins at a maternity hospital in St Petersburg. The first twin died nine hours after her birth. The second twin, who was transferred to a resuscitation and intensive therapy unit at one of the St Petersburg children's hospitals twenty hours after his birth, survived. The applicant was of the opinion that her daughter would also have survived had she been promptly transferred to a resuscitation and intensive therapy unit at a children's hospital. The applicant's mother sent three telegrams to the President of the Russian Federation, lamenting of the shortcomings in the emergency medical services provided.

The telegrams were forwarded to the Ministry of Healthcare of the Russian Federation for examination, asking the Committee for Healthcare to examine the allegations and take the necessary action. The Committee ordered an examination, carried out on the basis of the applicant's and the twins' medical records, which were obtained from the maternity hospital and the children's hospital. The results of the examination were set out in a report, which mainly concerned the development and treatment of the twin who had died.

On the same day, the Committee forwarded to the Ministry a copy of its reply to the applicant's mother and informed the Ministry that, according to the conclusion of a commission formed by the maternity hospital, the reasons for the applicant's premature delivery had been her compromised obstetric-gynaecological history – in particular, seven artificial abortions – and her urogenital mycoplasmosis infection.

It appears that a request by the applicant for a copy of the report was refused, and that that refusal was the subject of separate proceedings brought by the applicant against the Committee. In the course of those proceedings, on 30 November 2004, the applicant received a copy of the report and the

Committee's letter to the Ministry of 5 September 2003. On 25 February 2005 she brought new proceedings against the Committee, seeking a declaration that its actions had been unlawful in that it had collected and examined her medical records and those of her children, and had communicated the report containing her personal information to the Ministry without obtaining her consent, but all her attempts were dismissed, or no violation was found.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court reiterates that personal information relating to a patient belongs to his or her private life. The protection of personal data, not least medical data, is of fundamental importance to a person's enjoyment of his or her right to respect for private and family life as guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention. Respecting the confidentiality of health data is a vital principle in the legal systems of all the Contracting Parties to the Convention. It is crucial not only to respect the sense of privacy of a patient but also to preserve his or her confidence in the medical profession and in the health services in general. Without such protection, those in need of medical assistance may be deterred from revealing such information of a personal and intimate nature as may be necessary in order to receive appropriate treatment and, even, from seeking such assistance, thereby endangering their own health and, in the case of transmissible diseases, that of the community.

The Court has previously found that the disclosure – without a patient's consent – of medical records containing highly personal and sensitive data about a patient, including information relating to an abortion, by a clinic to the Social Insurance Office, and therefore to a wider circle of public servants, constituted an interference with the patient's right to respect for private life. The disclosure of medical data by medical institutions to a prosecutor's office and to a patient's employer, and the collection of a patient's medical data by an institution responsible for monitoring the quality of medical care were also held to have constituted an interference with the right to respect for private life.

In the present case, the applicant's medical records and those of her children were collected and examined by the Committee for Healthcare at the St Petersburg City Administration, acting at the request of the Ministry of Healthcare of the Russian Federation prompted by the complaints of the applicant's mother. The report prepared by the Committee and sent to the Ministry contained information from those records, in particular, information of a private and sensitive nature about the applicant, including the number of her previous pregnancies not resulting in deliveries. At no stage of that process was the applicant's consent sought or received. It follows that the actions in dispute constituted an interference with the applicant's right to respect for private life. It remains to be ascertained whether the interference was justified in the light of paragraph 2 of Article 8.

The Court observes that the Committee did not rely on any provision of domestic law in carrying out the actions in dispute. In the ensuing judicial review proceedings, it was found that those actions had complied with Article 61 of the Basic Principles of Public Health Law, a federal law which provided for the guarantee of non-disclosure of confidential medical information without a patient's consent. The decisive question is to what extent the actions in dispute were foreseeable by the applicant.

The Court notes that the guarantee, as formulated in Article 61 of the Basic Principles of Public Health Law, contained an exhaustive list of exceptions to the general rule of non-disclosure of confidential medical information without a patient's consent. The Court further notes that, in finding that the Committee's actions in collecting, examining and disclosing the applicant's medical data to the Ministry did not violate the confidentiality of the applicant's medical data, the domestic courts relied on the general duty of the Committee to provide the Ministry with detailed information in reply to the latter's requests. In so doing, they failed to refer to any provisions of domestic law on which their finding could have been based.

The Court further notes that the definition of confidential medical information in Article 61 was substance- and not form-based. Therefore, the domestic courts' distinguishing of the disclosure of medical records per se from the disclosure of information derived from medical records had no regard to the content of the information disclosed and lacked any legal basis.

In view of the foregoing considerations, the Court concludes that, despite having the formal option to seek judicial review of the Committee's actions, the applicant did not enjoy the minimum degree of protection against arbitrariness on the part of the authorities. The actions in dispute did not constitute a foreseeable application of the relevant Russian law.

The interference with the applicant's right to respect for private life was therefore not in accordance with the law within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention. That being so, the Court is not required to determine whether this interference pursued a legitimate aim and, if so, whether it was proportionate to the aim pursued.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

Russia is to pay the applicant, within three months from the date on which the judgment becomes final in accordance with Article 44 § 2 of the Convention, the following amounts, to be converted into the currency of the respondent State at the rate applicable at the date of settlement: EUR 5,000, plus any tax that may be chargeable, in respect of non-pecuniary damage; EUR 1,425, plus any tax that may be chargeable to the applicant, in respect of costs and expenses.

**89. Eur. Court of HR, Šantare and Labažņikovs v. Latvia, judgment of 31 March 2016, application no. 34148/07. The applicants complained that covert interception of their mobile phone conversations, which were subsequently used during their trial, had not been carried out in compliance with Article 8 of the Convention. The Court found a violation of Article 8.**

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**no. 34148/07**  
**31.03.2016**

### **ŠANTARE AND LABAŽŅIKOVŠ v. LATVIA**

The interception of the applicants' mobile phone conversations was not guaranteed adequate judicial review and safeguards against arbitrariness

### **Basic Facts**

The Bureau for the Prevention and Combating of Corruption ("the KNAB") received information concerning allegedly unlawful activities of officials of the State Pharmacy Inspectorate. The KNAB launched operational proceedings. In the context of those proceedings the second applicant was summoned to the KNAB to give statements about the activities of certain State officials supervising pharmaceutical matters in Latvia. An operational measure – the interception of the second applicant's telephone conversations – had been authorised until 12 May 2005.

Upon being summoned by the KNAB, on 12 April 2005 the second applicant went to its offices, where he was questioned by two investigators, H. and J. Initially, he refused to cooperate and instead asked

J. questions about his duties. On 13 April 2005 the second applicant arranged a meeting with J. away from the KNAB's offices. On the KNAB's behalf, the meeting was organised as an undercover operation, and prior authorisation from a specially authorised prosecutor of the Prosecutor General's Office was obtained. On 13 and 14 April 2005 three meetings took place between the second applicant and J. During the second meeting, which was video and audio recorded by J., the second applicant offered J. a bribe in the amount of 50,000 Latvian lati (LVL) and monthly payments of LVL 1,000 in return for the cessation of any investigative activities concerning his business and the State officials connected with it. During the meeting the second applicant paid J. LVL 18,000 as a first instalment.

Meanwhile, the second applicant called the first applicant. He asked her to withdraw cash from the company's account. Their phone conversations were intercepted and recorded. The next day, the second applicant arranged another meeting, during which he gave the investigator LVL 27,000. On the same day he was arrested by KNAB officers.

After the second applicant's meeting with J., the KNAB instituted criminal proceedings for bribery. The second applicant was charged as a suspect. The KNAB asked for the recordings to be included in the criminal case file. On 2 June 2005 the Office of the Prosecutor brought a charge of aiding and abetting against the first applicant, and a charge of bribery against the second applicant.

On 31 October 2006 the appellate court adopted a judgment which upheld the prosecutor's appeal and quashed the disputed parts of the lower court's judgment. The appellate court found the first applicant guilty, giving her a suspended sentence of one year's imprisonment. It also revoked the suspension of the second applicant's prison sentence and he was taken directly to prison from the courtroom. In an appeal on points of law the first applicant argued that the tapped phone conversations should not have been admitted as evidence, as they had been obtained without proper authorisation. The second applicant submitted, inter alia, that the appellate court had not assessed the lawfulness of the phone tapping and had ignored the fact that the criminal case had contained no reference to any authorisation to carry out the above activity as prescribed by Article 176 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. In this regard, he also submitted that the appellate court had consequently failed to observe that interference in a person's private life should be in accordance with the law, as required by Article 8 of the Convention. On 19 January 2007 the Senate of the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal on points of law in open court.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court considers, and this is not disputed, that the covert interception of the applicants' telephone conversations amounted to an interference within the meaning of Article 8 of the Convention. In examining whether the interference was justified in the light of paragraph 2 of Article 8, the Court has to assess whether the authorities acted "in accordance with the law", pursuant to one or more legitimate aims, and whether the impugned measure was "necessary in a democratic society".

With regard to the parties' disagreement as to whether the contested surveillance measure had any basis in domestic law, the Court observes that, according to the ruling of the Senate of the Supreme Court on 19 January 2007, the interception of the applicants' telephone conversation was carried out under section 17 of the Law on Operational Activities, and not under the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, as erroneously alleged by the applicants. In the absence of an arbitrary interpretation, the Court considers that the interception of the applicants' phone conversations had a legal basis in domestic law and that the legal basis was accessible to the applicants.

During the appellate court hearing and in their appeal on points of law both applicants raised in essence the objection that the criminal case-file contained no reference to a judicial decision authorising interception of their telephone conversations. In response, the Riga Regional Court submitted a general

conclusion about the admissibility of evidence, whereas the Senate of the Supreme Court's assessment was limited to referring to the legal provision governing the impugned surveillance measure. The Court notes that the Government has furnished a document prepared by the Supreme Court on 27 July 2012 according to which the contested operational measure had been authorised on 10 March 2005.

However, the Court cannot speculate as to whether the information furnished by the Government attested to the existence of a written authorisation in the form of a decision. Neither the appellate court nor the cassation court mentioned a reference number of the decision authorising the interception of the applicants' telephone conversations, a name of the judge who had adopted the decision or an entry number in the register of judicially authorised operational investigations. It cannot be seen from the case materials that the domestic courts had had access to the classified materials in the operation investigation file, and whether they had indeed verified that the judicial authorisation was part of that file. In these circumstances the Court concludes that, in the course of their criminal proceedings, the applicants could not verify whether the interference with their rights under Article 8 of the Convention had been carried out on the basis of a prior judicial authorisation. The domestic courts did not, contrary to the provisions of the domestic law, provide for an effective judicial review of the lawfulness of the contested measure and failed to serve as additional safeguards against arbitrariness within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The respondent State is to pay, within three months from the date on which the judgment becomes final in accordance with Article 44 § 2 of the Convention, the following amounts: EUR 1,500, plus any tax that may be chargeable, in respect of non-pecuniary damage to each applicant; EUR 800 to the second applicant, in respect of costs and expenses, plus any tax that may be chargeable to him.

**90. Eur. Court of HR, Cevat Özel v. Turkey, judgment of 7 June 2016, application no. 19602/06.**  
The applicant complained about the surveillance of his communications and the absence of notification. The Court recognised that the measures of surveillance could be lawful but the absence of notification impeded the applicant to ensure his rights. The Court thus concluded the violation of Article 8.

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**no. 19602/06**  
**7/06/2016**

#### **CEVAT ÖZEL v. TURKEY**

The surveillance of the applicant's communications and the absence of notification entailed a violation of the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant is a lawyer. He was born in 1948 and lives in Istanbul. By letter of 17 September 2004, the Istanbul Security Directorate requested the public prosecutor to request judicial authorization for the surveillance of eight mobile telephone numbers, including the applicant's. The letter indicated that information had been obtained that said persons were in contact with K.U. and M.H.U., wanted for, inter alia, organized crime, banking code offense and embezzlement.

K.U. and M.H.U were fleeing abroad and a red notice had been issued by Interpol about them. They are the former shareholders of a multitude of companies as well as a private bank, Imarbank, whose activities had been stopped for malpractices.

On the same day, at the request of the public prosecutor, the 8th Chamber of the Assize Court of Istanbul in charge of the criminal case against the said persons granted permission to listen to the communications of the telephone numbers in question, for a period limited to three months. This decision indicated, among the grounds, that these numbers were used for contacts with those used by K.U. and M.H.U. It covered the surveillance of the eight telephone numbers in question, including that of the applicant.

Furthermore, in the context of the same investigation and by decisions of 8 July 2004, 27 September 2004 and 12 October 2004, the 8th Chamber of the Istanbul Assize Court had also authorized the surveillance of ten other phone numbers and a mobile phone indicated by its number called "IMEI".

By letter of 17 December 2004, the Istanbul Public Prosecutor ordered the Istanbul Security Directorate to stop the execution of the surveillance measure in question in respect of the applicant's telephone number, as well as several other numbers. On an unspecified date, these recordings were destroyed. No notification to the applicant took place. In 2005, while examining a file at the clerk's office of the Seventh Chamber of the Assize Court of Istanbul, the Applicant saw this last letter containing the prosecutor's instructions to stop the wiretaps.

On 18 April 2005, relying on Article 573 of the Code of Civil Procedure governing the personal liability of judges in cases of flagrant error, the applicant lodged an action for compensation against the three members of the 8th Chamber of the Istanbul Assize Court. He alleged in particular in a very detailed argument that their decision was contrary to the laws in force; according to him, Act 4422 on the fight against criminal conspiracies, on which the decision was based, only limited the organized crimes for which such a measure could be applied and the case in question did not respond to any of these incriminations.

By a decision of 8 November 2005, the 4th Civil Division of the Court of Cassation, the competent body in this respect, dismissed the applicant. It stated that it had been established that the judges in question were responsible for the criminal case against K.U., Y.U. and MHU, accused in the "Imarbank" case of several violations of Law No. 4422, including those allowing telephone tapping, that the said persons were fugitives, and that the applicant "had been their counsel in one of their companies after retiring from their position as public prosecutor ". It added that the security management had asked for authorization to carry out the surveillance measure and that the public prosecutor had given her consent, had addressed the competent court and that thus all the acts were in conformity with the law and the procedure.

By the same decision, the applicant was also ordered to pay each of the three judges 1,000 Turkish liras (TRY) pursuant to Article 576 of the Code of Civil Procedure providing for the award of a "reasonable allowance" to judges in cases where such an action against them would be rejected.

By a decision of 15 March 2006, the general assembly of civil chambers of the Court of Cassation upheld this decision.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court observes that it is not disputed that the wiretapping of the applicant constitutes an interference with his right to respect for his private life and his correspondence guaranteed by Article 8 § 1 of the Convention. The main question is therefore whether the interference was justified under Article 8 § 2, in

particular if it was "prescribed by law" and "necessary in a democratic society", in pursuit of one of the goals set out in this paragraph.

The Court observes that the monitoring measure in this case was implemented in the framework of a judicial inquiry pursuant to Article 2 of Act No. 4422 on the fight against criminal conspiracy; legislation was therefore put in place. However, the Court reiterates that the notion of "law" also covers "the quality" of the law: the law must define the scope and modalities of the exercise of the discretion to apply the law.

In this context, the Court notes that the parties' observations differ on both the interpretation of the legal basis of the measure in question and the necessity or applicability of the measure in respect of the applicant. Nevertheless, noting above all, in the interests of procedural economy and good administration of justice, that the legislation applied at the time was abolished as a result of the judicial reforms, the Court considers that it is not called upon to examine these arguments for the following reason.

In the present case, the Court reiterates that, when surveillance has ceased, the question of post-notification of surveillance measures is indissolubly linked to the question of the effectiveness of judicial remedies and thus to the existence of effective safeguards against abuse of supervisory powers. In principle, the person concerned cannot, in principle, retrospectively challenge the lawfulness of the measures taken without his knowledge, unless he is advised to do so.

34. The Court has already said that it may not be possible in practice to require ex post notification in all cases. The activity or danger that a set of surveillance measures aims to combat may persist for years, even decades, after the removal of these measures. Post-notification to each individual affected by a measure now taken would undermine the long-term goal that originally motivated the surveillance. In addition, such notification could help to reveal the working methods of the intelligence services, their fields of activity and even, where appropriate, the identity of their agents. Therefore, the lack of subsequent notification to persons affected by secret surveillance measures, as soon as the latter is removed, can not in itself justify the conclusion that the interference was not "necessary in a democratic society" because it is precisely this lack of information that ensures the effectiveness of the measure constituting the interference. However, it is desirable to notify the person concerned after the lifting of surveillance measures as soon as the notification can be given without compromising the purpose of the restriction.

In the present case, although the law in question provided for the destruction of the data, it contained no indication of the notification of the measure to the person concerned. It follows that, according to the legislation in force at the material time, unless criminal proceedings were instituted against the subject of the interception and the intercepted data were used as evidence, or less than an indiscretion, it is unlikely that the person concerned could ever have learned that his communications had been intercepted. Nor has the Government demonstrated the existence of a regulation or practice, or indicated reasonable grounds for the failure to notify the applicant of the measure, which was an essential obstruction of the possibility of bringing an action.

Thus, there were no adequate and effective safeguards against possible abuse of the State's supervisory powers over wiretapping authorized by a court in the context of the judicial inquiry concerning the applicant.

This element is sufficient for the Court to conclude that the law in force at the material time and applied in the applicant's case did not have the required quality. The telephone tapping with the applicant was therefore not "prescribed by law".

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The respondent State is to pay the applicant, within three months from the date on which the judgment becomes final according to Article 44 § 2 of the Convention, the following amounts, to be converted into the currency of the State defendant, at the rate applicable on the date of settlement: EUR 7,500, plus any tax that may be chargeable, in respect of non-pecuniary damage; EUR 5,000, plus any amount that may be chargeable to the applicant as a tax, for costs and expenses.

**91. *Eur. Court of HR, Karabeyoğlu v. Turkey*, judgment of 7 June 2016, application no. 30083/10.** The applicant alleged that the monitoring of his communications and those of his wife and two children had been arbitrary and illegal, that his professional and personal reputation had been damaged as a result, and complained that he and his family had been denied the right of access to a court because of the failure of the Ministry of Justice to send him the documents concerning the phone-tapping operations. The Court found no violation of Article 8 as regards the telephone tapping in connection with the criminal investigation, but found a violation as regards the use in disciplinary proceedings of the information obtained by means of telephone tapping, and of Article 13 (right to effective remedy).

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**no. 30083/10**  
**07.06.2016**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**KARABEYOĞLU v. TURKEY**

Unlawful use of information obtained by means of telephone tapping in disciplinary proceedings against a public prosecutor

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Hamdi Ünal Karabeyoğlu, is a Turkish national who was born in 1955 and lives in Usak (Turkey). In 2007 the Istanbul public prosecutor's office initiated a criminal investigation into a criminal organisation known as Ergenekon, whose presumed members were suspected of having engaged in activities aimed at undermining the political regime and bringing about a military coup. On 23 March 2008 the premises of a political party were searched in the context of the investigation. The documents and items seized included information about the private lives of a number of judges and prosecutors and their relations with certain individuals and entities.

On 14 August 2008 the public prosecutor sought permission from the Judicial Inspection Board to initiate an investigation into the judges and prosecutors concerned, including Mr Karabeyoğlu. Permission was granted on 5 September 2008, and various procedural steps were taken by inspectors from the Ministry of Justice. On 14 October 2008 the Istanbul Assize Court authorised the monitoring for a three-month period of five telephone numbers registered in Mr Karabeyoğlu's name. On 3 November 2008 the monitoring of three of the five numbers was discontinued on the grounds that they were being used by other people. On 15 January 2009 the order for the monitoring of the two numbers used by Mr Karabeyoğlu was extended.

On 19 January 2009, after examining the results of the first stage of the phone-tapping operation, the inspectors forwarded the records to the public prosecutor with responsibility for organised crime, who

gave a decision not to prosecute on 28 December 2009, holding that it could not be concluded from the evidence obtained that the judges and prosecutors concerned had provided the Ergenekon organisation with assistance and support. On 31 December 2009 the phone-tapping records were destroyed by the public prosecutor's office in accordance with the decision not to prosecute. On 5 January 2010 the devices on which the recordings had been made were also destroyed by the same office.

On 31 December 2009 the public prosecutor sent Mr Karabeyoğlu a note informing him of the decision not to prosecute and the destruction of the material obtained during the surveillance operation. Mr Karabeyoğlu was also informed in a letter from the Ministry of Justice dated 12 March 2010 that a disciplinary investigation in respect of him had been discontinued on 5 March 2010 and that the evidence obtained by means of telephone tapping had been destroyed on 11 March 2010.

## **Law – Article 8**

### The criminal investigation

The Court considered that the monitoring of Mr Karabeyoğlu's telephone lines had interfered with the exercise of his right to respect for his private life and correspondence. The interference had been in accordance with domestic law<sup>2</sup> and had been subject to a set of restrictive conditions. The Court also noted that the legislation had been accessible and foreseeable as to its effects, since Turkish law laid down strict conditions for the imposition of surveillance measures and the processing of the information thus obtained and defined with sufficient clarity the scope and manner of exercise of the discretion conferred on the authorities in relation to telephone tapping. The Court thus found no indication that the legislation had been breached, and concluded that Mr Karabeyoğlu had enjoyed the minimum degree of protection required by the rule of law in a democratic society.

As to whether the interference had been necessary, the Court observed that Mr Karabeyoğlu had been placed under surveillance on the grounds that he was suspected of belonging to the Ergenekon criminal organisation or providing it with assistance and support. It noted that the authorities had reached that degree of suspicion after discovering evidence during a search. The Court also considered that there was no indication that the criminal case file in the domestic proceedings had not contained sufficient information to satisfy an objective observer that Mr Karabeyoğlu might have committed the offence for which he had been placed under surveillance. In addition, it found that there was no evidence that the interpretation and application of the relevant legislation in the present case had been so arbitrary or manifestly unreasonable as to render the measure in question unlawful. Furthermore, it noted in particular that both Article 135 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CCrP) and the relevant rules and regulations contained various clauses aimed at limiting the effects of surveillance measures to the greatest extent possible and ensuring that they were implemented in accordance with the law, any breaches being punishable by imprisonment.

Accordingly, the Court found that the monitoring of Mr Karabeyoğlu's telephone lines had been ordered on the basis of suspicions that could be regarded as objectively reasonable and that the measure had been implemented in accordance with the relevant legislation. In particular, the telephone tapping had been authorised by a court with a view to preserving national security and preventing disorder; the rules and regulations containing strict conditions for the implementation of the measure had been scrupulously observed; the information obtained had been processed in compliance with the legal requirements; the information had been destroyed within the statutory time-limits after the public prosecutor had decided not to prosecute; and Mr Karabeyoğlu had been sent a note within the required time-limit informing him of the procedure undertaken and the measure applied, and had also been sent a copy of the material in the file relating to him.

The Court concluded that the interference with Mr Karabeyoğlu's right under Article 8 § 1 of the Convention had been necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security and for the

prevention of disorder and crime. It therefore held that there had been no violation of Article 8 of the Convention as regards the telephone tapping in relation to the criminal investigation.

### The disciplinary investigation

The Court observed that the material obtained during the monitoring of Mr Karabeyoğlu's telephone lines had also been used in the disciplinary proceedings against him, thus entailing a breach of domestic law, in particular Article 22 of the Constitution and Article 135 of the CCrP, which listed the cases in which surveillance measures could be applied and made no mention of disciplinary investigations. Furthermore, Article 137 §§ 3 and 4 of the CCrP provided that information obtained as a result of a surveillance measure was to be destroyed once the investigation had been completed. The Court observed in this connection that although, following the decision of 31 December 2009 not to prosecute, the prosecutor in charge of the criminal investigation had destroyed the recordings in question on 31 December 2009 and 5 January 2010, a copy had indisputably remained in the possession of the judicial inspectors, who had used the relevant material in the context of the disciplinary investigation opened in respect of Mr Karabeyoğlu and had not destroyed it until 11 March 2010. In the Court's view, the relevant legislation had thus been breached in two respects: the information had been used for purposes other than the one for which it had been gathered and had not been destroyed within the 15-day statutory time-limit after the criminal investigation had ended.

The Court observed that these aspects were specifically covered by provisions of Turkish criminal law that appeared to afford adequate protection of the right to private life in the context of the case under examination: Article 138 of the Criminal Code provided for a term of imprisonment in the event of failure by public officials to destroy data within 15 days after the end of the investigation where this requirement applied, and Article 139 of the Criminal Code provided that a prosecution could be brought even in the absence of a criminal complaint. Nevertheless, there was no indication in the present case that any such investigation had been opened on that account, or that Mr Karabeyoğlu had had any other means of redress available. The Court therefore found that during the disciplinary investigation in respect of Mr Karabeyoğlu, none of those provisions had been observed by the national authorities.

Accordingly, the Court concluded that the interference with the exercise of Mr Karabeyoğlu's right to respect for his private life had not been "in accordance with the law", as required by Article 8 § 2 of the Convention, as far as the disciplinary investigation was concerned. The Court thus held that there had been a violation of Article 8 as regards the use in the disciplinary investigation of information obtained by means of the monitoring of Mr Karabeyoğlu's telephone lines.

### **Law – Article 13**

The Court noted that the Government had not produced any examples to show that in a case of this kind it was possible to challenge a failure to comply with the conditions laid down in domestic law regarding surveillance measures, or any examples of the review of the use in the context of a separate procedure – in this case a disciplinary investigation – of information obtained as a result of a surveillance measure performed during a criminal investigation. The Court therefore found that no institution was empowered to review the compatibility of the surveillance measure with the Convention requirements, with a view to granting appropriate relief to Mr Karabeyoğlu if necessary.

The Court thus concluded that Mr Karabeyoğlu had not had a domestic remedy available for securing a review of whether the interference with his right to respect for his private life was compatible with the Convention requirements, whether in relation to the criminal or the disciplinary investigations. It therefore found a violation of Article 13 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8 (with regards to the use in disciplinary proceedings of the information obtained by means of telephone tapping) and of Article 13.

**Article 41 (just satisfaction)**

The Court held that Turkey was to pay Mr Karabeyoğlu 7,500 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**92. Eur. Court of HR, *Versini-Campinchi and Crasnianski v. France*, judgment of 16 June 2016, application no. 49176/11.** The case concerned the interception, transcription and use in disciplinary proceedings against her of conversations which the applicant, who is a lawyer, had had with one of her clients. The Court held that as the transcription of the conversation between the applicant and her client had been based on the fact that the contents could give rise to the presumption that the applicant had herself committed an offence, and the domestic courts had satisfied themselves that the transcription did not infringe her client's rights of defence, the fact that the former was the latter's lawyer did not suffice to constitute a violation of Article 8 of the Convention in the applicant's regard.

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**no. 49176/11**  
**16.06.2016**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**VERSINI-CAMPINCHI AND CRASNIANSKI v. FRANCE**

No violation of the Convention on account of transcription of telephone conversation between a lawyer and her client giving rise to the presumption that the lawyer had participated in an offence

**Basic Facts**

Following the death of a number of people suspected of having been contaminated after eating meat from cattle infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy, a judicial investigation was opened in December 2000. The company Districoupe – a subsidiary of the Buffalo Grill chain of restaurants supplying the meat – was suspected of breaching the embargo on the importation of beef meat from the United Kingdom, a county affected by a major outbreak of the disease. Mr Versini-Campinchi, a lawyer, was instructed to defend the interests of Mr Picart, managing director of Districoupe and chairman of Buffalo Grill's supervisory board. Ms Crasnianski, also a lawyer, assisted him on the case.

On instructions issued by the investigating judge on 2 December 2002, Mr Picart's telephone line was tapped. Telephone conversations between Mr Picart and the applicants were intercepted and transcribed. Mr Picart was placed in police custody on 17 December 2002, and charged on 18 December 2002 along with three other people.

On 12 May 2003, having been requested to rule on the lawfulness of the phone-tapping records in question, the investigation chamber of the Paris Court of Appeal annulled the transcript of a conversation of 24 January 2003 between Mr Picart and Mr Versini-Campinchi on the grounds that it concerned the exercise of Mr Picart's rights of defence and could not support a presumption that the lawyer had participated in an offence. It refused to annul the other transcripts, however, considering that the contents were capable of disclosing a breach of professional confidentiality and contempt of court by Mr Versini-Campinchi and Ms Crasnianski. In a judgment of 1 October 2003 the Court of Cassation dismissed an appeal on points of law lodged by Mr Picart.

Meanwhile, on 27 February 2003, the public prosecutor at the Paris Court of Appeal had sent a letter to the Chairman of the Paris Bar asking him to initiate disciplinary proceedings against the applicants. On 21 March 2003 the Chairman had instituted disciplinary proceedings against Ms Crasnianski for breach of professional confidentiality. However he had discontinued the proceedings against Mr Versini-Campinchi regarding the contents of the conversation of 14 January 2003. Before the Bar Council the applicants sought to have the transcript of the phone-tapping record of 17 December 2002 removed from the evidence in the case on the grounds that it was illegal. On 16 December 2003 the Bar Council, sitting as a disciplinary board, rejected their request. On the merits, the Bar Council found that Ms Crasnianski's comments recorded on 17 December 2002 infringed Article 63-4 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and breached the obligation of professional confidentiality incumbent on her as a lawyer. Observing that she had acted on the instructions of Mr Versini-Campinchi, the Council found that they had acted jointly. The Bar Council imposed an order on Mr Versini-Campinchi debarring him from exercising the profession of lawyer for two years, suspended for 21 months, and debarred Ms Crasnianski from exercising the profession for one year suspended.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court observed that the interception, recording and transcription of the telephone conversation of 17 December 2002 between Mr Picart and Ms Crasnianski amounted to an interference with their right to respect for their private life and their correspondence. That interference had continued in Ms Crasnianski's case by the use of the transcript of that conversation in disciplinary proceedings against her.

The legal basis of the interference in question was contained in Articles 100 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure, with the interception, recording and transcription of the conversation having been carried out further to authorisation by an investigating judge – on the basis of those provisions – to tap the telephone line. The consequence of that, by definition, was that conversations with third parties would be listened to and thus utterances by persons who were not targeted by the measure ordered by the judge would also be intercepted.

The Court reiterated that it had accepted that Articles 100 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure met the required standard of “quality of the law”. It observed, however, that those provisions did not cover the situation of persons whose utterances had been intercepted in the course of tapping another person's telephone. In particular, they did not provide for the possibility of using the intercepted utterances against the author in the context of a different set of proceedings from those in which the telephone tapping had been ordered.

The Court noted, however, that the Court of Cassation had already ruled at the relevant time that, as an exception, a conversation between a lawyer and his or her client overheard while carrying out a lawful investigative measure could be transcribed and added to the file where it appeared that the contents could give rise to a presumption that the lawyer was participating in an offence. Admittedly, it was only in a judgment delivered on 1 October 2003 – in the context of the present case – that the Court of Cassation had expressly indicated that the same was true where the offence did not relate to the case being examined by the investigating judge. The Court held, however, that in the light of Articles 100 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure and the case-law of the Court of Cassation, Ms Crasnianski, a legal practitioner, could have foreseen that Mr Picart's telephone was likely to be tapped pursuant to those provisions, that those utterances which gave rise to a presumption of her participation in an offence could be recorded and transcribed – despite her status as a lawyer – and that she ran the risk of being prosecuted. She could have foreseen that disclosing information covered by professional confidentiality would expose her to proceedings under Article 226-13 of the Criminal Code. She could also have foreseen that a breach of that kind would expose her to disciplinary proceedings before the

Bar Council, which could take action, inter alia, on the request of the public prosecutor. The Court therefore accepted that the interference in question had been in accordance with the law.

The Court had already had the opportunity to specify<sup>4</sup> that as it had been done in the context of criminal proceedings, the interception, recording and transcription of Mr Picart's telephone communications in accordance with the judge's instructions of 2 December 2002 had pursued one of the aims provided for in Article 8, namely, "prevention of disorder". The Court found that the same was true of the use of the transcript of the telephone conversation of 17 December 2002 in the context of disciplinary proceedings brought against Ms Crasnianski for breach of professional confidentiality.

The telephone tapping and the transcription in question had been ordered by a judge and carried out under the latter's supervision, a judicial review had taken place in the context of the criminal proceedings brought against Mr Picart and Ms Crasnianski had obtained a review of the lawfulness of the transcription of the recording in the context of the disciplinary proceedings brought against her. The Court considered that, even if she had not been able to apply to a judge to have the transcription of the telephone communication of 17 December 2002 annulled, in the specific circumstances of the case there had been effective scrutiny capable of limiting the interference complained of to that which was necessary in a democratic society.

With regard to the fact that on 17 December 2012 Ms Crasnianski had been communicating with Mr Picart in her capacity as a lawyer, the Court had previously observed in its earlier case-law<sup>5</sup> that whilst legal professional privilege was of great importance for both the lawyer and his or her client and for the proper administration of justice and was one of the fundamental principles on which the administration of justice in a democratic society was based it was not, however, inviolable. It primarily imposed certain obligations on lawyers and the lawyer's defence role formed the very basis of legal professional privilege.

The Court observed that French law very clearly provided that respect for the rights of the defence required that telephone conversations between a lawyer and his client remained confidential, and prohibited the transcription of such conversations, even those overheard while carrying out a lawful investigative measure. There was only one exception to that: transcription was possible where it was established that the contents of a conversation could give rise to a presumption that the lawyer himself was participating in an offence. Moreover, Article 100-5 of the Code of Criminal Procedure expressly established that, on pain of nullity, communications with a lawyer relating to the exercise of the rights of the defence could not be transcribed.

According to the Court, that approach, which was compatible with its case-law, was tantamount to finding that, as an exception, legal professional privilege, the basis of which was respect for the client's rights of defence, did not preclude the transcription of an exchange between a lawyer and his client in the context of lawful interception of the client's telephone conversations where the contents of that exchange gave rise to a presumption that the lawyer himself was participating in an offence, and in so far as the transcription did not affect the client's defence rights. The Court accepted that as that exception to the principle of confidentiality of communications between a lawyer and his client was restrictively worded, it contained an adequate safeguard against abuse.

The Court reiterated that what was important in this context was that the client's rights of defence were not adversely affected, that is, that the utterances transcribed were not used against him in the proceedings. In the present case the investigation chamber had annulled certain other transcripts on the ground that the conversations recorded had concerned the exercise of Mr Picart's defence rights. The reason for refusing to annul the transcript of 17 December 2002 was that it had found that Ms Crasnianski's utterances were capable of disclosing a breach of professional confidentiality on her part, and not because they had amounted to evidence against her client.

As the transcription of the conversation of 17 December 2002 between Ms Crasnianski and Mr Picart had been based on the fact that the contents gave rise to a presumption that Ms Crasnianski had herself committed an offence, and the domestic courts had been satisfied that the transcription did not infringe Mr Picart's defence rights, the Court held that the fact that Ms Crasnianski was Mr Picart's lawyer did not suffice to find a violation of Article 8 of the Convention in her regard. A lawyer was particularly well qualified to know where the limits of lawfulness were and to realise that, where applicable, his communications with his client were capable of giving rise to a presumption that he had himself committed an offence. This was particularly true where the utterances themselves were capable of amounting to an offence, such as a breach of professional confidentiality.

Accordingly, the interference in question was not disproportionate to the legitimate aim pursued – "prevention of disorder" – and could be regarded as "necessary in a democratic society" within the meaning of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8.

**93. Eur. Court of HR, Vukota-Bojić v. Switzerland, judgment of 18 October 2016, application no. 61838/10. The applicant complained that the surveillance by the insurance company had been in breach of her right to respect for private life, and that it should not have been admitted in the proceedings that resulted in the reduction of her disability pension. The Court held that the secret surveillance ordered had interfered with the applicant's private life. However, the surveillance had not been prescribed by law, it had failed to regulate with clarity when and for how long surveillance could be conducted, and how data obtained by surveillance should be stored and accessed. There had therefore been a violation of Article 8.**

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**no. 61838/10**  
**18.10.2016**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **VUKOTA-BOJIĆ v. SWITZERLAND**

Unlawful surveillance by an insurance company of a road accident victim breached her right to privacy

#### **Basic Facts**

In August 1995, Ms Vukota-Bojić was struck by a motorcycle and fell on her back. She was initially diagnosed with cervical trauma and possible cranial trauma, and underwent several medical examinations which resulted in conflicting reports about her ability to work. On the basis of these reports, Ms Vukota-Bojić's insurer decided her entitlement to daily allowances should cease from April 1997. This decision was overturned by the Social Insurance Court of Zurich, which ordered further investigations to be carried out. These reports concluded that Ms Vukota-Bojić had brain dysfunction and that this had been caused by her accident. Meanwhile, on 21 March 2002, the local social security authority had granted Ms Vukota-Bojić a full disability pension. On 14 January 2005, the insurer decided once again that Ms Vukota-Bojić's insurance-related benefits should cease.

After this decision was also overturned by the Social Insurance Court, the insurer invited Ms Vukota-Bojić to undergo a further medical evaluation. She refused, which prompted the insurer to conduct secret surveillance on Ms Vukota-Bojić to establish her condition. The surveillance was carried out by private

investigators on four different dates, lasting several hours each time. Investigators followed Ms Vukota-Bojić in public places over long distances. A surveillance report was prepared.

As a result of the report, the insurer confirmed its decision that Ms Vukota-Bojić's insurance-related benefits should cease. In April 2007, a neurologist appointed by the insurer, Dr H., released an anonymous expert opinion which concluded that Ms Vukota-Bojić was only incapacitated by 10%. The insurer decided to grant Ms Vukota-Bojić daily allowances and a pension at this rate.

Ms Vukota-Bojić appealed the insurer's decision, but on 29 March 2010, the Federal Court held that the insurer had been justified in asking Ms Vukota-Bojić to complete a further medical examination, that its surveillance of her had been lawful and that Dr H.'s report was persuasive on the issue of her entitlement to benefits. Ms Vukota-Bojić lodged a request with the court to clarify its decision, but this was dismissed.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court held that the surveillance arranged by the insurer amounted to a violation of Ms Vukota-Bojić's right to a private life. First, the court noted that, since the insurer had been operating a state insurance scheme and was regarded in domestic law as a public authority, its actions could be imputed to the state. Furthermore, while the surveillance had been conducted in public places only, the fact that the investigators had acted systematically, had compiled a permanent record on Ms Vukota-Bojić and that the information had been requested to help resolve an insurance dispute meant that Article 8 § 1 was engaged and Ms Vukota-Bojić's private life had been interfered with.

Moreover, that interference had not been "prescribed by law" as required by Article 8 § 2. While Swiss legislation did empower insurance companies to take "necessary investigative measures" and collect "necessary information" where an insured person had not been forthcoming with information, these provisions were insufficiently precise. In particular, they did not indicate when and for how long surveillance could be conducted, or include safeguards against abuse, such as procedures to be followed when companies are storing, accessing, examining, using, communicating or destroying information. This created a risk of unauthorised access to and disclosure of information. The surveillance of Ms Vukota-Bojić had therefore been in breach of Article 8.

### **Law – Article 6**

The Court held that there had been no infringement of Article 6, in regard to the admission of evidence in court obtained by the surveillance, as well as Dr H.'s expert opinion based on that information. The proceedings, when taken as a whole, had been conducted in a fair manner. Ms Vukota-Bojić had had an opportunity to challenge the admissibility of the surveillance report and related evidence, and the Federal Court had given a reasoned decision as to why they should be admitted. Furthermore, the surveillance information and Dr H.'s opinion had not been the only evidence relied upon to support the Federal Court's decision, as the court had also emphasised the existence of other conflicting medical reports.

### **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held that Switzerland was to pay the applicant 8,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 15,000 in respect of costs and expenses.

**94. Eur. Court of HR, Bašić v Croatia, judgment of 25 October 2016, application no. 22251/13. The applicant complained that the secret surveillance of his telephone conversations, subsequently used as evidence during his trial, had been in violation of the guarantees of Articles 8 and 6 § 1 of the Convention. The Court found a violation of Article 8.**

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**no. 22251/13**

**25.10.2016**

### **BAŠIĆ v. CROATIA**

The use of secret surveillance of the applicant's telephone conversations as evidence in his trial breached the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

On 26 November 2007 the State Attorney's Office for the Suppression of Corruption and Organised Crime asked an investigating judge of the Zagreb County Court to authorise the tapping the telephone conversations of the applicant and several other individuals on the grounds of their suspected participation in organised drug trafficking, customs evasion, and the abuse of power and authority. On 27 November 2007 the investigating judge granted the request and issued an order for the use of secret surveillance measures. In the course of the investigation, the investigating judge issued several further secret surveillance orders to the same effect. In addition to the phone tapping, the investigating judge also authorised the covert monitoring of the suspects.

On the basis of the evidence obtained by the secret surveillance measures, on 2 July 2008 the police lodged a criminal complaint against the applicant and five other persons with the Slavonski Brod County State Attorney's Office in connection with suspected drug trafficking and customs evasion. On 4 July 2008 the investigating judge opened an investigation in respect of the applicant and the other suspects in connection with suspected drug trafficking. She also ordered the applicant's pre-trial detention.

On 25 November 2008 the applicant and four other persons were indicted by the Slavonski Brod County Court on charges of drug trafficking. On 12 June 2009 the applicant asked to exclude from the proceedings the evidence obtained by means of secret surveillance as being unlawfully obtained. He argued that the secret surveillance had been carried out on the basis of orders which had been issued contrary to the relevant domestic law and practice of the Constitutional Court in that they contained no reasoning justifying the use of secret surveillance. At a hearing on 18 Jun

e 2009 the Slavonski Brod County Court dismissed the applicant's request as unfounded.

A further hearing was held on 29 September 2009 at which the applicant reiterated his request for the exclusion of the evidence obtained by secret surveillance as being unlawfully obtained. The applicant further contended that his exact location at the moment of the alleged commission of the offence at issue should be established by obtaining the location tracking data of the mobile phone which he had allegedly used. The trial bench dismissed the applicant's request as unfounded and decided to continue with the examination of evidence.

Further hearings were held on 2 and 19 February 2010 at which the trial bench examined the secret surveillance recordings. The applicant reiterated his request for an expert telecommunications report to establish the location of his mobile phone at the moment of the alleged offence. The defence also challenged the credibility of a police report concerning the applicant's surveillance, expressing doubts as to the reasons why there were no recordings accompanying that report.

By a judgment of 1 March 2010, the Slavonski Brod County Court found the applicant guilty as charged and sentenced him to five years' imprisonment. As to the applicant's arguments concerning the alleged unlawfulness of the secret surveillance orders, that court held that the orders had outlined reasons for believing that the applicant had probably participated in the commission of the offence at issue and that the investigation could not have been conducted by other means.

On 21 April and 6 July 2010, the applicant lodged an appeal against the first-instance judgment with the Supreme Court, but his appeal was dismissed. The applicant subsequently lodged a complaint with the Constitutional Court complaining that his right to respect for private life and confidentiality of correspondence guaranteed by the Constitution had been breached by the unlawful and unjustified secret surveillance, and that his right to a fair trial had been breached by the use of the evidence thereby obtained in the criminal proceedings against him. On 11 July 2012 the Constitutional Court dismissed the applicant's constitutional complaint as unfounded.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court notes in the case at hand that the investigating judge's order concerning the use of secret surveillance measures was based on a request for the use of such secret surveillance by the competent State Attorney's Office and included the statutory phrase that "the investigation could not be conducted by other means, or would be extremely difficult". It did not, however, provide adequate reasoning as to the particular circumstances of the case and in particular reasons why the investigation could not be conducted by other, less intrusive, means.

The Court found in the Dragojević case that the lack of reasoning underlying the investigating judge's order, accompanied by the practice of the domestic courts in circumventing such lack of reasoning by retrospective justification of the use of secret surveillance, was not in compliance with the relevant domestic law and did not therefore in practice secure adequate safeguards against various possible abuses. The Court thus considered that such practices were not compatible with the requirement of lawfulness nor were they sufficient to keep the interference with an applicant's right to respect for his private life and correspondence to what was "necessary in a democratic society", as required under Article 8.

The Court finds that the same considerations as arose in the Dragojević case are applicable in the case at hand. It sees no reason to depart from this case-law in the present case.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Law – Article 6 § 1**

The applicant had also complained that evidence obtained by means of secret surveillance had been used in the criminal proceedings against him, thereby casting doubts on the fairness of his trial.

The first question to be examined in this context is whether the applicant was given the opportunity of challenging the authenticity of the evidence and opposing its use. The Court notes that the applicant was given, and effectively used, such an opportunity. The domestic courts examined his arguments on the merits and provided reasons for their decisions. The fact that the applicant was unsuccessful at each step does not alter the fact that he had an effective opportunity to challenge the evidence and oppose its use.

With regard to the quality of the evidence in question, the Court notes that the applicant's main objection to the use of the evidence obtained by means of secret surveillance concerned the formal use of such information as evidence during the proceedings. He never contested the authenticity of the recordings

reproduced at the trial and all the defence's doubts as to the accuracy of the recordings were duly examined and addressed by the trial court.

As regards the objections voiced by the defence, the trial court in particular questioned the police officers in charge of the operation in order to clarify the circumstances of the case and provided a reasoned decision setting out its findings as to the manner in which the recordings had been obtained and documented. These findings were also examined and confirmed by the Supreme Court, which considered that all the relevant circumstances of the case had been properly established by the first-instance court.

Given that it is primarily for the domestic courts to decide on the admissibility of evidence, on its relevance and the weight to be given to it in reaching a judgment, the Court finds nothing here that casts any doubts on the reliability and accuracy of the evidence in question. In view of the above, Court considers that there is nothing to substantiate the allegation that the applicant's defence rights were not properly complied with in respect of the evidence adduced or that its evaluation by the domestic courts was arbitrary. Thus, no violation of Article 6 § 1 was found.

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The respondent State is to pay the applicant, within three months from the date on which the judgment becomes final in accordance with Article 44 § 2 of the Convention, the following amount, to be converted into Croatian kunas (HRK) at the rate applicable at the date of settlement: EUR 7,500, plus any tax that may be chargeable, in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**95. Eur. Court of HR, *Figueiredo Teixeira v. Andorra*, judgment of 8 November 2016, application no. 72384/14. The case concerned the storage and communication to the judicial authority of data from telephone calls made by the applicant, who was suspected of the serious offence of drug trafficking. The Court found in particular that since the impugned interference was prescribed in national law, a person holding a prepaid mobile phone card could reasonably have expected those provisions to be applied in his case. Furthermore, the criminal procedure provided a wide range of safeguards against arbitrary actions. Hence, no violation of Article 8 was found.**

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**no. 72384/14**  
**08.11.2016**

Press release issued by the Registrar

#### **FIGUEIREDO TEIXEIRA v. ANDORRA**

Use of personal telephone data by an investigating judge did not breach the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

Mr Figueiredo Teixeira, who was suspected of the serious offence of drug trafficking, was arrested on 5 December 2011. The judge (*batlle*) responsible for the criminal investigation asked Andorra Telecom to hand over a list of incoming and outgoing calls from two telephone numbers pertaining to Mr Figueiredo Teixeira over the period from 15 August to 4 December 2011, and to inform him of the identities of subscribers holding the numbers set out in the list.

Mr Figueiredo Teixeira filed an application to set aside that decision, alleging that he had sustained a breach of his right to the secrecy of his communications. On 22 November 2012 the *batlle* dismissed that application. Mr Figueiredo Teixeira then brought urgent proceedings for termination of the consequences of the allegedly unlawful use of the data gathered and for the destruction of the documents in question. The duty *batlle* and then the Higher Court of Justice dismissed his appeal.

Subsequently, relying on the constitutional rights to a fair trial, to respect for private life and to the secrecy of communications, he lodged an *empara* appeal with the Constitutional Court. By a judgment notified on 19 March 2014 that court dismissed the appeal. The Constitutional Court found that the storage of customers' data was provided for under Andorra Telecom's general terms and conditions of sale, which had, in principle, been accepted when the customer had subscribed to the telephone company's services. It also cited Articles 47 and 87 of the Code of Criminal Procedure authorising the investigating judge to adopt the requisite measures in the framework of an investigation, including, under certain circumstances, requesting the interception of telephone calls.

By judgment of 29 September 2015 Mr Figueiredo Teixeira was sentenced to a four-year prison term (including two years unsuspended) for the serious offence of sale and possession of large quantities of drugs for commercial purposes. The Higher Court of Justice upheld the impugned judgment. That court rejected Mr Figueiredo Teixeira's request to stay the execution of the unsuspended prison term on the basis of Rule 39 of the Rules of Court.

## **Law – Article 8**

The primary question in the present case was whether the interference, that is to say the storage and communication to a court of the applicant's personal data, had been sufficiently foreseeable.

Assessing whether the interference was prescribed by law, the Court observed that although a holder of a prepaid telephone card could reasonably have inferred from the Decree of 19 September 1996 on the establishment and modification of telephone rates, published on 25 September 1996, that his personal data had in fact been stored, it emphasised in particular that the impugned interference was covered in Andorran law by Article 87 of the Code of Criminal Procedure and Law No. 15/2003.

As regards whether the effects of the current regulations were sufficiently foreseeable, the Court noted that Article 87 of the Code of Criminal Procedure in force at the relevant time had detailed the conditions under which interference with the right to respect for private life was authorised. In particular, Article 87 § 5 of the Code of Criminal Procedure had required the courts to give a reasoned decision explaining the necessity and proportionality of the measure and mentioning the evidence obtained and the seriousness of the offence under investigation. The Court considered that the Order of 30 August 2012 had complied with those requirements, particularly in view of the requirements of the investigation, the seriousness of the offence in question (drug trafficking) and the practicalities of the intrusion into the applicant's private sphere.

The Court emphasised that the Andorran procedure provided a wide range of safeguards against arbitrary actions. These included the involvement of a judge (*batlle*) to grant prior authorisation for the measure, exclusively applicable to very serious offences; a statutory time-limit on the measure; and finally, the fact that the applicant could at any time contest the lawfulness of evidence gathered during proceedings.

The Court emphasised that section 5 of Law No. 15/2003 on the protection of personal data clearly excluded from its scope the processing of data relating to the prevention of criminal offences. Along similar lines, section 16 provided that the subject data could not oppose the communication of his or her personal data on the basis of a judicial decision.

As regards the application of these concurrent rules to the situation of the applicant holding a prepaid card, the Court observed that the aforementioned rules drew no distinction between mobile telephone contract holders and prepaid card users. The Court therefore took the view that it was reasonable to consider, in line with the prosecution submissions during the empara appeal and reprised by the Constitutional Court, that those laws and statutes were applicable to both types of telephone services. The Court held that the application of domestic law to the present case had been sufficiently foreseeable for the purposes of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention.

As regards whether the interference had pursued a legitimate aim, the Court had no doubt as to the fact that the impugned interference, which had been geared to combating drug trafficking, had pursued one of the legitimate aims listed in the second paragraph of Article 8 of the Convention, that is to say the prevention of crime. As regards the proportionality of the measure, the Court pointed out that the impugned interference had been authorised for a shorter period than that originally requested by the police. Moreover, the offences charged had been committed at most six months before the period covered by the impugned measure. The Court considered that the Andorran authorities had thus respected “proportionality between the effects of the use of special investigation techniques and the objective that has been identified”, and that they had used an unintrusive method to “enable the offence to be detected, prevented or prosecuted with adequate effectiveness”.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8

**96. Eur. Court of HR, Surikov v. Ukraine, judgment of 26 January 2017, application no. 42788/06.**  
**The applicant complained that his employer had arbitrarily collected, retained, and used sensitive, obsolete and irrelevant data concerning his mental health in considering his application for promotion, and had unlawfully and unfairly disclosed this data to the applicant’s colleagues and to a civil court during a public hearing. The Court found a violation of Article 8.**

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**no. 42788/06**  
**26.01.2017**

### **SURIKOV v. UKRAINE**

The collection, retention and use of sensitive health data by an employer in considering a promotion and the disclosure of such data to colleagues and during a public hearing violated the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant was employed as a worker by the Tavrida State Publishing House (hereafter “Tavrida”). In June 1997 the applicant asked N., the director of Tavrida, to place him on the reserve list for promotion to an engineering position corresponding to his qualifications. Having received no follow-up, in 2000 the applicant applied for the second time. On 6 March 2000 this application was refused. On an unspecified date in 2000 the applicant appealed to the Central District Court of Simferopol (hereinafter “the Central District Court”) seeking, in particular, to oblige his employer to consider him for an engineering position. During the proceedings, the defendant company submitted that its refusal was connected to the state of the applicant’s mental health. In particular, as was apparent from the information retained on the applicant’s personnel file, in 1981 he had been declared unfit for military service in peacetime in accordance with Article 5b of the then applicable 1973 Diseases and Handicaps Schedule issued by the Ministry of Defence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (“the USSR”). In the summer of 1997 the human resources department had obtained from the military enlistment office a certificate stating that the applicant had indeed been dispensed under Article 5b, which read as follows: “psychosis and

psychotic disorders connected to organic cerebral lesions with residual moderately manifested deviations in the mental sphere". The defendant company further noted that as the applicant had not provided any subsequent information concerning his state of health, his appointment to an engineering position – which implied managerial responsibilities and supervision of other employees – was considered unwarranted. A copy of the certificate issued by the military enlistment office was provided to the court for examination during the public hearings.

B., the applicant's supervisor questioned by the court during the trial, submitted that the applicant had been a diligent employee. However, in his view he lacked the necessary personal skills to occupy a position with managerial responsibilities. In particular, occasionally the applicant had been involved in conflicts with his colleagues. All of them, when questioned by B., had suggested that they did not want to have the applicant as their supervisor. In view of the above and with regard being had to the reasons for the applicant's dispensation from military service, in B.'s view the management had been correct in refusing the applicant's application for promotion. On 17 August 2000 the court rejected the applicant's claim.

In 2002 Tavrida referred the applicant for a medical examination "with a view to determining [his] fitness for employment" as an engineer. On 5 September 2002 the applicant obtained a certificate signed by six medical specialists, including a psychiatrist and a neurologist from the local polyclinic attesting to his fitness for employment as an engineer. In August 2003 the applicant was appointed as a foreman and in April 2006 as an engineer-technologist.

19. In October 2000 the applicant instituted civil proceedings against Tavrida seeking damages and apologies from its management for his purported defamation resulting from the dissemination of information concerning the medical grounds for his dispensation from military service. He alleged, in particular, that the defendant company had had no right to enquire of the enlistment office in 1997 about the grounds for his dispensation, to use this information in deciding on his promotion and to disseminate it to his direct supervisor and other colleagues, as well as to communicate it to the court in the framework of the civil dispute.

On 23 January 2001 the Central District Court rejected the applicant's claim as lacking legal basis. In particular, it noted that labour law did not prohibit employers from enquiring of military enlistment offices about their employees' military service records. On 28 March 2001 the Supreme Court of the ARC quashed this judgment and remitted the case for a fresh consideration.

On 23 July 2003 the Central District Court took a fresh decision rejecting the applicant's claims, referring, again, to Article 7 of the Civil Code and having found that there was nothing unlawful either in Tavrida's or its director's personal conduct with respect to the processing of the disputed information. Without referring to any legal provisions, the court noted that the director had been authorised to know the reasons for the applicant's dispensation from military service, as this information had been a part of the personnel record compiled and kept by employers in the ordinary course of business. The applicant unsuccessfully appealed to the Supreme Court.

In July 2006 the applicant instituted civil proceedings challenging, in particular, the lawfulness of the actions of N., K. and B. with respect to the processing of his health data. The challenge was dismissed on various appeals, including with the Supreme Court.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court notes that the information at stake in the present case concerned an indication that in 1981 the applicant had been certified as suffering from a mental health related condition. The Court concludes that such information by its very nature constitutes highly sensitive personal data regardless of whether

it was indicative of a particular medical diagnosis. Collection, storage, disclosure and other types of processing of such information fall therefore within the ambit of Article 8. Having established that the case at hand concerned an interference with Article 8, the Court proceeded to evaluate whether it could be justified.

As regards the lawfulness of the disputed interference, as follows from the Government's submissions, the collection and retention of the disputed data was effected on the basis of section 34 of the Military Service Act and the provisions of Instruction no. 165. Use of this data for deciding on the applicant's promotion was, in turn, based on Articles 2 and 153 of the Labour Code. The Court notes that none of the foregoing provisions was expressly referred to in the relevant domestic courts' judgments. However, in the light of the available materials, and notably, the Government's observations, the Court is prepared to accept that collection, storage, and other use of the applicant's mental health had some basis in domestic law.

Insofar as quality, in particular, foreseeability of the applicable law may be concerned, the Court observes that there was apparently considerable disagreement among the various judges involved in the adjudication of the applicant's claims as to the scope and meaning of the applicable legal acts, which resulted in numerous remittals of his case for reconsideration. It appears that this disagreement may have been connected to a structural problem in domestic law.

The Court notes that the Government has not commented on the aims of the disputed interference. Based on the available materials, the Court considers that the measures complained of could be effected for various legitimate aims, notably protection of national security, public safety, health, and the rights of others, in particular of the applicant's co-workers.

The Court notes that at the time of the events giving rise to the present application, Ukraine was not a member of the Data Protection Convention or any other relevant international instrument. However, at the same time, its national legislation contained a number of safeguards similar to those which were included in these legal acts. Relevant provisions can be found, notably, in the Information Act of 1992 and various acts pertaining to confidentiality of medical information. However, it appears that these safeguards remained largely inoperative in the applicant's case, both during the processing of his personal data by his employer, and during the examination of his relevant claims by the domestic courts. The Court next notes that the aforementioned legislative framework essentially resulted in a quasi-automatic entitlement for any employer, whether public or private, to obtain and retain sensitive health-related data concerning any employee dispensed from military service on medical grounds. The Court notes that it is not in a position to substitute itself for the competent domestic authorities in deciding on the modalities of keeping the military duty registers. However, the Court reiterates that core principles of data protection require the retention of data to be proportionate in relation to the purpose of collection and envisage limited periods of storage. In line with this, the Court considers that delegating to every employer a public function involving retention of sensitive health-related data concerning their employees can only be justified under Article 8 if such retention is accompanied by particularly strong procedural guarantees for ensuring, notably, that such data would be kept strictly confidential, would not be used for any other purpose except that for which it was collected, and would be kept up-to-date. It follows that applicable law, as interpreted and applied by the domestic courts in the present case, permitted storage of the applicant's health-related data for a very long term and allowed its disclosure and use for purposes unrelated to the original purpose of its collection. The Court considers that such broad entitlement constituted a disproportionate interference with the applicant's right to respect for private life. It cannot be regarded necessary in a democratic society.

The Court recognises that employers may have a legitimate interest in information concerning their employees' mental and physical health, particularly in the context of assigning them certain job functions connected to specific skills, responsibilities or competences. However, it underlines once again that

collection and processing of the relevant information must be lawful and such as to strike a fair balance between the employer's interests and the privacy-related concerns of the candidate for the relevant position.

In this connection, the Court takes note of the applicant's arguments that by the time his health data originating in 1981 was used for deciding on his promotion (1997 and 2000) it was quite old. In addition to that, as it did not indicate the specific nature of the applicant's medical condition diagnosed at that time, it was also incomplete for the purposes of deciding whether or not he could be entrusted with the requested position. It is also notable that in 2002 the applicant was referred by his employer for a medical examination with a view to determining his fitness for the position he sought to occupy. Having obtained a positive conclusion, he was placed on a reserve list and subsequently promoted to his satisfaction. The Court has not been provided with any reasons why this option for determining the applicant's medical fitness could not have been used any earlier.

In the light of the considerations advanced in paragraphs 92 and 93 above, the Court finds that the use of the disputed data for deciding on the applicant's promotion and its unrestricted disclosure to various third parties in this context were not necessary in a democratic society.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The respondent State is to pay the applicant, within three months from the date on which the judgment becomes final, in accordance with Article 44 § 2 of the Convention, EUR 6,000, to be converted into the currency of the respondent State at the rate applicable at the date of settlement, plus any tax that may be chargeable

**97. Eur. Court of HR, *Matanović v. Croatia*, judgment of 4 April 2017, application no. 2742/12. The case concerned a complaint about entrapment, secret surveillance measures and the non-disclosure and use of the evidence thus obtained. Mr Matanović, the applicant, was convicted of corruption in 2009. His conviction was essentially based on evidence obtained via telephone tapping following a covert operation involving an informant. The Court found that there had been no violation of Article 6 § 1 as concerned Mr Matanović's complaint of entrapment, a violation of the same Article with as concerned the non-disclosure of certain evidence in the criminal proceedings against Mr Matanović, and a violation of Article 8 because the procedure for ordering and supervising the tapping of Mr Matanović's telephone had not been lawful.**

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**no. 2742/12  
04.04.2017**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **MATANOVIĆ v. CROATIA**

Croatian official was not incited to commit corruption, but his defence rights were restricted in the criminal proceedings against him

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Josip Matanović, is a Croatian national who is currently serving an 11-year prison sentence in Lepoglava (Croatia) for corruption offences.

The allegations of corruption against Mr Matanović, a vice-president of the Croatian Privatisation Fund, were first made in April 2007 by J.K., the representative of an investment project in the Zadar region. J.K., who had contacted Mr Matanović as an official of the Fund, reported to the State Attorney's Office that Mr Matanović had requested a bribe in order to ensure the realisation of his project. The Attorney's office then asked an investigating judge for authorisation to use secret surveillance measures against Mr Matanović, including tapping of his telephone, covert surveillance and the use of J.K. as an informant. The judge allowed the request under the Code of Criminal Procedure, indicating in his order that the investigation into the offences by other means would either be impossible or extremely difficult.

Following the covert operation, Mr Matanović was arrested and detained, then indicted in February 2008. He was convicted in May 2009 on several counts of taking bribes, facilitating bribe-taking and abusing his power and authority to support certain investment projects and privatisations. The first instance court relied extensively on the secret surveillance recordings and in particular on those concerning the first meeting arranged after J.K. had agreed to become an informant. At this meeting Mr Matanović had explained to J.K. how much was expected in payment and that it was usual practice to remunerate for lobbying.

Mr Matanović appealed to the Supreme Court, complaining that the secret surveillance measures had not been lawful, that he had been entrapped and that relevant evidence had not been disclosed to the defence. However, the Supreme Court, finding these complaints ill-founded, upheld his conviction of bribe-taking and abuse of power and authority. As concerned the non-disclosure of evidence complaint in particular, the Supreme Court held that the defence had been provided with transcripts of the secret surveillance recordings (whether they had been used to convict Mr Matanović or not); but found that it

had no right to have access to other material concerning individuals who were not eventually accused in the proceedings. The Constitutional Court subsequently endorsed these findings.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court stressed that the relevant Croatian law, namely the Code of Criminal Procedure, as interpreted by the national courts, had not been clear as to the authorities' discretion to order surveillance measures. Nor had this law in practice – as applied in Mr Matanović's case – provided sufficient safeguards against possible abuse; the investigating judge had simply referred to the statutory phrase that the investigation could not be conducted by other means, without indicating why the investigation could not be conducted by other, less intrusive, measures. The procedure for ordering and supervising the tapping of Mr Matanović's telephone had not therefore been lawful, in violation of Article 8.

### **Law – Article 6 § 1 (as concerned the plea of entrapment)**

The Court noted that it was clear from the documents in the case file that Mr Matanović had been involved in corruption. It also found that, on balance, the prosecuting authorities, rather than initiating that criminal activity, had "joined" it. First, there was nothing to suggest that J.K. had been acting for the prosecuting authorities in the initial contact with Mr Matanović; J.K. was a representative for an investment project and in that capacity contacted Mr Matanović as the official of the privatisation fund. Moreover, the prosecuting authorities had only instructed J.K. to act as an informant once J.K. had reported his allegations about Mr Matanović. Indeed, it was clear from the recording of the two men's conversation during their first meeting after J.K. had agreed to become an informant – relied on by the first-instance court – that it was Mr Matanović who had full control of the corruption: it was he who had instructed J.K. on how to proceed with the bribes and he who had explained the reasons why it was justified. The prosecuting authorities' investigation had therefore essentially been passive and remained within the bounds of undercover work, rather than inciting Mr Matanović to commit offences he would not have otherwise committed. Accordingly, there had been no violation of Article 6 § 1 as concerned the plea of entrapment.

### **Law – Article 6 § 1 (as concerned the non-disclosure and use of evidence obtained via secret surveillance)**

Mr Matanović's complaints concerning the unfairness of the proceedings related to his impaired access to three main categories of evidence obtained by the use of secret surveillance measures. The first category of evidence concerned the surveillance recordings which had been submitted into evidence by the prosecution and had been relied upon for Mr Matanović's conviction. The second category of evidence concerned recordings of the secret surveillance of Mr Matanović and the other accused, which had been included in the case file but not relied upon for his conviction. The third category of evidence was made up of the recordings, obtained through secret surveillance in the context of the same case but concerning other individuals who had not eventually been accused in the proceedings. Those recordings had not been relied upon for Mr Matanović's conviction, nor had they been included in the case file or disclosed to the defence.

There was nothing allowing the Court to conclude that Mr Matanović had been prevented from adequately preparing his defence as concerned the surveillance recordings used as evidence for his conviction. Transcripts of the recordings, prepared by an independent and impartial expert, had been made available to the defence as from Mr Matanović's indictment. Although he had not been given copies of the actual recordings, they had been played back at trial and he had been given ample opportunity to compare the transcripts to the played material and have any discrepancies clarified. Moreover, Mr Matanović had never challenged the authenticity of the recordings or contested that the

conversations had actually taken place. Therefore, the Court found no unfairness in the proceedings in this respect.

As concerned the recordings included in the case file but not used for Mr Matanović's conviction, the Court noted that he had not made any specific argument as to the possible relevance of this second category of evidence at any point during the domestic proceedings. It could not therefore be concluded that any restriction on his access to these particular recordings had been sufficient to breach the right to a fair trial.

However, the defence was denied access to a third category of evidence which had been obtained through secret surveillance in the context of the same case but which concerned individuals who were not eventually accused in the proceedings. That decision had been made by the prosecuting authorities without providing the defence with the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Indeed, there was no procedure under domestic law to assess the relevance of the evidence obtained by the prosecuting authorities and the necessity of its disclosure. Mr Matanović had therefore been prevented from establishing whether the evidence in the prosecution's possession that had been excluded from the file could have reduced his sentence or put into doubt the scope of his alleged criminal activity. Nor had the domestic courts provided convincing reasons, based on a balancing of the relevant interests that would justify the restriction on Mr Matanović's defence rights. The Supreme Court had simply dismissed the complaint on the grounds that he had no right of access to such recordings. The Court found that such a position, allowing the prosecuting authorities to assess what might or might not be relevant to the case, without any further procedural safeguards, was contrary to the requirements of Article 6 § 1.

In view of this deficient procedure for the disclosure of evidence and the resulting restrictions on the defence rights, the Court concluded that the proceedings against Mr Matanović, taken as a whole, had been unfair, in violation of Article 6 § 1.

#### **Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)**

The Court held, by four votes to three, that Croatia was to pay Mr Matanović 1,500 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 2,500 for costs and expenses.

#### **Separate Opinions**

Judges Lemmens, Gričco and Ravarani expressed a joint dissenting opinion on Article 41. Judges Lemmens and Karakaş each expressed a concurring opinion. These opinions are annexed to the judgment.

**98. Eur. Court of HR, Trabajo Rueda v. Spain, judgment of 30 May 2017, application no. 32600/12.**  
The applicant complained that the police seizure and inspection of his computer had amounted to an interference with his right to respect for his private life and correspondence. The Court deemed that the police seizure of the computer and inspection of the files which it contained, without prior judicial authorisation, had not been proportionate to the legitimate aims pursued and had not been “necessary in a democratic society”.

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**no. 32600/12**  
**30.05.2017**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **TRABAJO RUEDA v. SPAIN**

Granting police access to computer files containing child pornography material without prior judicial authorisation, in a non-emergency situation, violated the owner’s right to respect for his private life

#### **Basic Facts**

On 17 December 2007 Mr Trabajo Rueda brought his computer to a computer shop to have a defective data recorder replaced. The technician duly replaced the part and tested it by opening a number of files, whereupon he noticed that they contained child pornography material. On 18 December 2007 he reported the facts to the authorities and handed over the computer to the police, who examined its content and passed it on to the police computer experts. The investigating judge was then informed of the ongoing police inquiries.

On 20 December 2007 Mr Trabajo Rueda was arrested on his way to the computer shop to pick up his computer. In May 2008 he was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment by the Seville Audiencia provincial for possession and circulation of pornographic images of minors. Mr Trabajo Rueda invited the court to declare the evidence null and void on the grounds that his right to respect for his private life had been infringed by the fact that the police had accessed the content and archives of his computer, but this request was dismissed. Mr Trabajo Rueda appealed on points of law and lodged an amparo appeal with the Constitutional Court, both of which remedies proved unsuccessful.

#### **Law – Article 8**

First of all, the Court held that the fact of accessing files in Mr Trabajo Rueda’s personal computer and subsequently convicting him had amounted to an interference by the authorities with the applicant’s right to respect for his private life, noting that that interference was prescribed by domestic law, namely legal texts<sup>3</sup> combined with the interpretative case-law of the Constitutional Court establishing the rule that prior judicial authorisation was required where an individual’s private life was likely to be infringed, except in emergencies, in which case subsequent judicial scrutiny was possible.

Secondly, the Court noted that the impugned interference had pursued the legitimate aim of “prevention of crime” and “protection of the rights of others”, emphasising that “sexual abuse is unquestionably an abhorrent type of wrongdoing, with debilitating effects on its victims” and that “children and other vulnerable individuals are entitled to State protection, in the form of effective deterrence, from such grave types of interference with essential aspects of their private lives”.

Thirdly, the Court found that the seizure and inspection of the computer files by the police as effected in the present case had been disproportionate to the legitimate aims pursued and had therefore not been

“necessary in a democratic society”. The Court pointed out that it was difficult, in the present case, to assess the urgency of the situation requiring the police to seize the files from Mr Trabajo Rueda’s personal computer and to access their content, bypassing the normal requirement of prior judicial authorisation, given that there was no risk that the files would disappear, and that the computer had been seized and placed in safekeeping by the police and was not connected to Internet. The Court therefore failed to see why waiting the relatively short time to secure prior judicial authorisation before examining Mr Trabajo Rueda’s computer would have impeded the police investigation into the impugned facts. Consequently, it found a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (just satisfaction)**

The Court held, unanimously, that the finding of a violation in itself constituted sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage sustained by Mr Trabajo Rueda.

### **Separate opinion**

Judge Dedov expressed a separate opinion, which is annexed to the judgment.

### **99. Eur. Court of HR, Bogomolova v. Russia, judgment of 20 June 2017, application no. 13812/09.**

**The case concerned the use of a minor’s image without parental authorisation. The Court found a violation of Article 8, stating in particular that the domestic courts had failed to examine whether the applicant had given her consent for the publication of the photograph, focusing instead on the authorisation she had given that her son be photographed. The Court also highlighted the false impressions and inferences which could be drawn from the context of the photograph.**

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**no. 13812/09**  
**20.06.2017**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **BOGOMOLOVA v. RUSSIA**

Right to private and family life of a mother and her minor son infringed when his photo was published without authorisation

### **Basic Facts**

In November 2007, a photograph of the applicant’s son was published on the cover of a booklet prepared by the Municipal Centre for Psychological, Medical and Social Services. 200 copies of the booklet, entitled “Children need a family”, were circulated to inform the community about the role of the Centre in both protecting orphans and assisting families hoping to adopt.

Ms Bogomolova brought civil proceedings to complain that she, together with her son, had suffered damage to her honour, dignity and reputation. She claimed that the use of the photograph had given the impression that she had abandoned her son and that this had affected her reputation not only as a mother, but also as a schoolteacher. Furthermore, her son had become a victim of mockery amongst his peers following his appearance on the booklet.

The courts dismissed her claims however, finding that the photograph had been taken with her authorisation and that she had not placed any restrictions on its use.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court recalled that a person's image constituted one of the chief attributes of his or her personality and that the right to protect this image was thus an essential component of personal development. As such, Article 8 presupposed the right to control the use of one's image, including the right to refuse its publication.

In the present case the Court accepted that the publication of the photograph came within the scope of Ms Bogomolova's and her son's "private life" within the meaning of Article 8. The Court observed that, in taking their decision to dismiss Ms Bogomolova's claims, the domestic courts had established that the photograph had been taken with her authorisation and that she had not placed any restrictions or conditions on its use. However, they had failed to examine whether she had given her consent to the publication of the photograph.

Moreover, the context of the photograph could have given the false impression that the child pictured had been abandoned by his parents. This or any other inference which could be drawn from the photo could have prejudiced public perception of the familial bond that Ms Bogomolova shared with her son. The Court therefore held that there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

### **Article 41 (just satisfaction)**

The Court held that Russia was to pay Ms Bogomolova 130 euros (EUR) in respect of pecuniary damage, EUR 7,500 in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 100 for costs and expenses.

**100. Eur. Court of HR, Aycaguer v France, judgment of 22 June 2017, application no. 8806/12.** The case concerned the applicant's refusal to undergo biological testing, the result of which was to be included in the national computerised DNA database (FNAEG). The Court found a violation of Article 8, noting that no appropriate action had been taken on the reservation by the Constitutional Court regarding the constitutionality of FNAEG and that there was no provision for differentiating the period of storage depending on the nature and gravity of the offences committed. Secondly, the Court ruled that the regulations on the storage of DNA profiles in the FNAEG did not provide the data subjects with sufficient protection.

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**no. 8806/12**  
**22.06.2017**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **AYCAGUER v. FRANCE**

A conviction for refusing to be included in the national computerised DNA database is contrary to the right to respect for private life

#### **Basic Facts**

On 17 January 2008 Mr Aycaguer took part in a protest organised by an agricultural trade union and a mutual-based land alliance on the occasion of a professional meeting in the *département of Pyrénées-Atlantiques*. This event was held in a tense political and trade-union context. At the end of the meeting scuffles broke out between the demonstrators and the gendarmerie

Mr Aycaguer was placed in police custody and brought before the Bayonne Criminal Court, charged with intentional violence not entailing total unfitness for work against a public servant person and using or threatening to use a weapon, in this instance an umbrella. Mr Aycaguer was sentenced to two months' imprisonment, suspended.

On 24 December 2008, following a request from the prosecutor's office, Mr Aycaguer was ordered to undergo biological testing, on the basis of Articles 706-55 and 706-56 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. On 19 May 2009 he was summoned to appear before the criminal court for failing to provide a biological sample and on 27 October 2009 the Bayonne *tribunal de grande instance* ordered him to pay a fine of 500 euros. The Pau Court of Appeal upheld that judgment. Mr Aycaguer lodged an appeal on points of law, which was dismissed.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court pointed out that the mere fact of storing data on a person's private life amounted to an interference within the meaning of Article 8. DNA profiles contained a huge amount of unique personal data.

From the outset the Court specified that it was fully aware that in order to discharge their duty to protection of the public, the national authorities had to maintain databases which very effectively helped to suppress and prevent specific offences, and in particular sex offences, which was why the FNAEG had been set up.

The Court noted that Mr Aycaguer had not so far been included in the FNAEG because he had refused to undergo biological testing as required by law and that he had been convicted on that basis.

Although the interference was prescribed by French law and pursued a legitimate aim, it should be noted that pursuant to Article R. 53-14 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the duration of storage of DNA could not exceed forty years in the case of persons convicted of offences which the Government considered to display “a specific degree of seriousness”. The Court noted that those “forty years” in principle constituted a maximum period which should have been adjusted by a separate decree. Since no such decree was ever issued, the forty-year period is, in practice, treated as equivalent to a norm rather than a maximum.

The Court went on to observe that on 16 September 2010 the Constitutional Council issued a decision to the effect that the provisions relating to the impugned computer file were in conformity with the Constitution, subject *inter alia* to “determining the duration of storage of such personal data depending on the purpose of the file stored and the nature and/or seriousness of the offences in question”. The Court noted that, to date, appropriate action had been taken on that reservation. It observed that no differentiation was currently provided for depending on the nature and/or seriousness of the offence committed, despite the major disparity in the situations potentially arising, as witness the case of Mr Aycaguer. The latter’s actions had occurred in a political and trade union context and merely concerned hitting unidentified gendarmes with an umbrella. Such offences were very different from other very serious offences such as sex offences, terrorism, crimes against humanity or trafficking in human beings.

As regards the deletion procedure, this only applied to suspects, not convicted persons such as Mr Aycaguer. The Court considered, however, that convicted persons too should be entitled to apply for the deletion of their stored data.

The Court further considered that, owing to its duration and the lack of a possibility of deletion, the current regulations on the storage of DNA profiles in the FNAEG did not provide the data subject with sufficient protection and therefore did not strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests.

Lastly, the Court found that the respondent State overstepped its margin of appreciation in this sphere. Mr Aycaguer’s conviction for having refused to undergo biological testing the result of which was to be included in the FNAEG amounted to a disproportionate infringement of his right to respect for private life, and therefore could not be deemed necessary in a democratic society.

There had therefore been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

**Article 41 (just satisfaction)**

The Court held that France was to pay the applicant 3,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 3, 000 in respect of costs and expenses.

101. *Eur. Court of HR, Dagregorio and Mosconi v. France*, judgment of 22 June 2017, application no. 65714/11. The applicants considered that their conviction for refusing to undergo biological testing amounted to a disproportionate interference with their right to respect for their private life and their physical integrity. Relying on Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) read in conjunction with Article 8, they alleged discrimination, emphasising that only individuals suspected or convicted of a certain category of criminal offence were subject to biological testing. Under Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association), they alleged that there has been a violation of their trade-union freedom. Lastly, under Article 14 in conjunction with Article 11, they submitted that the authorities should not have treated them in the same way as the persons targeted by the legislature when the FNAEG had been set up. The Court unanimously declared the application inadmissible.

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no. 65714/11  
22.06.2017

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **DAGREGORIO AND MOSCONI v. FRANCE**

Two trade unionists convicted for having refused to undergo biological testing for inclusion in a DNA database should have lodged an appeal on points of law

#### **Basic Facts**

Following the takeover of the *Société nationale Corse Méditerranée* (SNCM) by a financial operator, the SNCM's crews, including Mr Dagregorio and Mr Mosconi in their capacity as representatives of the Union of Corsican Workers, occupied and immobilised the vessel "Pascal Paoli".

On 2 December 2009 the Marseilles Criminal Court imposed suspended sentences on Mr Dagregorio and Mr Mosconi, of one year's and six month's imprisonment respectively, for the apprehension, kidnapping, illegal restraint or unlawful detention of several individuals and usurpation of the command of a vessel.

On the basis of Articles 706-54 and 706-56 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP), Mr Dagregorio and Mr Mosconi were ordered to report for biological testing, intended to identify their DNA. This information was to be included in the national computerised DNA database (FNAEG). Mr Dagregorio and Mr Mosconi refused.

On 19 October 2010 the Bastia Criminal Court sentenced them to one month's imprisonment. The Bastia Court of Appeal upheld the judgments, finding that "the public authority's interference in the exercise of the right to respect for private life provided for by the French legislature in accordance with Articles 706-54 to 706-56 of the CCP is not contrary to the provisions of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights". Varying the sentence on the basis that the offences of which Mr Dagregorio and Mr Mosconi had been convicted in 2009 had not been committed for base motives or in an ordinary criminal context, the Appeal Court fined them one thousand euros. Mr Dagregorio and Mr Mosconi did not lodge an appeal on points of law, on the basis that there was no chance of such an appeal succeeding.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted, in particular, that on 16 September 2010 the Constitutional Council, to which the Court of Cassation had referred a request for a preliminary ruling on constitutionality, had given a decision to

the effect that Articles 706-54 to 706-56 of the Code of Criminal Procedure were in conformity with the Constitution, albeit setting out an interpretative reservation. The Constitutional Council had held that it was incumbent on the legislature to make the duration of storage of the personal data in question proportional to the nature and/or seriousness of the offences in question.

The Court deduced that Mr Dagregorio and Mr Mosconi could have appealed to the Court of Cassation for a ruling on the application of the impugned provisions, taking into account the interpretative reservation set out by the Constitutional Council. That reservation referred to an obligation to ensure proportionality in appraising the duration of storage of personal data. However, the applicants had lodged no such appeal.

It transpired that at the material time, following the judgments of the Bastia Court of Appeal, before the time-limit on lodging an appeal on points of law had expired; the Court of Cassation had not yet adjudicated on the question in issue in the light of the interpretative reservation set out by the Constitutional Council. The applicants therefore failed to demonstrate that their remedy had reasonably appeared inadequate and ineffective.

In the Court's opinion, in the absence of any judicial precedent applicable to the applicants' situation, there was doubt as to the effectiveness of an appeal on points of law owing to a decision given by the Constitutional Council: it was therefore a point which should have been submitted to the Court of Cassation. The mere fact of harbouring doubts as to the prospects of a given appeal succeeding was not sufficient reason for omitting to use the remedy in question.

The application had to be rejected for non-exhaustion of domestic remedies.

**Conclusion:** application inadmissible

**102. Eur. Court of HR, *Satakunnan Markkinapörssi Oy and Satamedia Oy v. Finland*, judgment of 27 June 2017, application no. 931/13. After two companies had published the personal tax information of 1.2 million people, the domestic authorities ruled that such wholesale publication of personal data had been unlawful under data protection laws, and barred such mass publications in future. The companies complained to the European Court of Human Rights that the ban had violated their right to freedom of expression. The Court held that the ban had interfered with the companies' freedom of expression. However, it had not violated Article 10 because it had been in accordance with the law, it had pursued the legitimate aim of protecting individuals' privacy, and it had struck a fair balance between the right to privacy and the right to freedom of expression. However, the Court did find a violation of Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing within a reasonable time), due to the excessive length of the proceedings**

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**no. 931/13  
27.06.2017**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **SATAKUNNAN MARKKINAPÖRSSI OY AND SATAMEDIA OY v. FINLAND**

Banning the mass publication of personal tax data in Finland did not violate the right to freedom of expression

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant companies, Satakunnan Markkinapörssi Oy and Satamedia Oy, are Finnish limited liability companies based in Kokemäki (Finland). Both companies published the newspaper Veropörssi, which reported on taxation information.

In 2003 the second applicant company, together with a telephone operator, started an SMS-service permitting people to obtain taxation information from a database. The database had been created using information already published in 2002 in Veropörssi on 1.2 million persons' income and assets (amounting to a third of all taxable persons in Finland).

In April 2003 the Data Protection Ombudsman brought administrative proceedings concerning the manner and extent of the applicants' processing of taxation data. The Data Protection Board dismissed the Ombudsman's case on the grounds that the applicant companies were engaged in journalism and so were entitled to a derogation from the provisions of the Personal Data Act. However, the case subsequently came before the Supreme Administrative Court, which in September 2009 found that the publication of the whole database could not be considered as journalistic activity but as the processing of personal data, which the applicant companies had no right to do. The court quashed the earlier decisions and referred the case back to the Data Protection Board. In November 2009 the board forbade the applicant companies from processing taxation information to the extent that they had done in 2002 and from passing such data to the SMS-service. This decision was ultimately upheld by the Supreme Administrative Court in June 2012.

#### **Law – Article 10**

The Court held that there had been an interference with the applicant companies' right to impart information under Article 10, arising from the prohibition on them processing and publishing taxation data. However, the Court held that there had been no violation of Article 10, because the interference

had been “in accordance with the law”, it had pursued a legitimate aim, and it had been “necessary in a democratic society”.

In regard to the question of whether the interference had been “in accordance with the law”, the Court held that it had had a legal basis in sections 2(5), 32 and 44(1) of the Personal Data Act. It had been sufficiently foreseeable for the applicant companies that their activities would be considered unlawful under that legislation, and that such a mass collection and wholesale dissemination of data would not be covered by the law’s derogation for journalistic purposes.

In regard to the question of whether the interference had pursued a legitimate aim, the Court held that the interference had clearly been made in order to protect “the reputation or rights of others”, a legitimate aim under Article 10 § 2. The protection of privacy had been at the heart of the data protection legislation, and the Data Protection Ombudsman’s actions against the companies had been based on concrete complaints from individuals claiming that their privacy had been infringed.

The core question before the Court was whether the interference had been “necessary in a democratic society”. When addressing this issue, the Court was required to assess whether the domestic authorities had appropriately balanced the right to respect for private life and the right to freedom of expression. The Court concluded that a fair balance had been struck, and that the domestic authorities had given due consideration to the relevant principles and criteria set down in the Court’s case law. In particular, the Court agreed with the conclusion of the Supreme Administrative Court, that the publication of the taxation data in the manner and to the extent described did not contribute to a debate of public interest, and that the applicants could not in substance claim that the publication had been carried out for a solely journalistic purpose within the meaning of the relevant law.

Furthermore, the Court noted that the applicants’ collection, processing and dissemination of data had been conducted on a bulk basis, in a way that impacted on the entire adult population. Compiling the data had involved circumventing the normal channels used by journalists to obtain such information, as well as the checks and balances established by the authorities to regulate access to it. The applicants’ dissemination of the data had made it accessible in a manner and to an extent which had not been intended by the legislator.

Though Finnish law had made personal taxation information publicly accessible, data protection legislation had also established significant limits to this accessibility. The parliamentary review of such legislation in Finland had been both exacting and pertinent, a process reflected at the EU level. In such circumstances, the Finnish authorities had enjoyed a wide margin of appreciation in deciding how to strike a fair balance between the competing rights of privacy and expression relating to the use of the data. The Court also took into consideration the fact that most countries in Europe do not grant public access to personal tax information and the Finnish legislation is somewhat exceptional in this regard. Furthermore, the decisions of the authorities had not put a total ban on the applicant companies’ publication of taxation data, but had merely required them to make such publications in a manner consistent with Finnish and EU data protection laws.

In light of these considerations, the Court found that the Finnish authorities had acted within their margin of appreciation, and that the reasons relied upon for their interference with the applicants’ freedom of expression had been both relevant and sufficient to show that it had been “necessary in a democratic society”. There had therefore been no violation of Article 10.

## **Law – Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing within a reasonable time)**

Noting that the domestic proceedings had lasted between February 2004 and June 2012, the Court held that – even taking into account the legal complexity of the case – the length of proceedings had been excessive and had failed to meet the reasonable time requirement, in violation of Article 6 § 1.

### **Article 41 (just satisfaction)**

The Court found no evidence of any pecuniary or non-pecuniary damage resulting from the violation, but held that Finland was to pay the applicant companies 9,500 euros in respect of costs and expenses.

**103. Eur. Court of HR, Terrazzoni v. France, judgment of 29 June 2017, application no. 33242/12. The case concerned the use, in the context of disciplinary proceedings against a judge, of the transcript of a telephone conversation that had been intercepted by chance in criminal proceedings in which the judge had not been involved. The Court found no violation of Article 8, as the interference complained of had been in accordance with the law and had been aimed at establishing the truth both in relation to the initial criminal proceedings against F.L. and in relation to the ancillary criminal proceedings concerning the judge. The Court concluded that there had been effective scrutiny capable of limiting the interference in question to what was necessary in a democratic society.**

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**no. 33242/12  
29.06.2017**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **TERRAZZONI v. FRANCE**

The use of a transcribed telephone conversation for disciplinary purposes was subject to effective judicial scrutiny and did not entail a breach of the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Dominique Terrazzoni, is a French national who was born in 1962 and lives in Toulon. She was appointed as a judicial officer by a decree of 14 December 1988. In July 2000 she took up a position at the Toulon District Court, and then became a judge at the Toulon *tribunal de grande instance* (TGI) in January 2008.

On 6 September 2008, pursuant to letters rogatory issued by an investigating judge of the Nice TGI in connection with a criminal investigation concerning drugs offences, a telephone conversation was intercepted between Ms Terrazzoni and F.L., an individual known to the police and the owner of the line being tapped.

Having been informed of the content of that conversation, the Principal Public Prosecutor at the Aix-en-Provence Court of Appeal alerted the public prosecutor at the Marseilles TGI and the President of the Aix-en-Provence Court of Appeal. The latter summoned Ms Terrazzoni to appear before him on 29 October 2008. He informed her of the telephone tapping, summarised the content of her remarks and questioned her about the nature of her relations with F.L., the content of their conversation and the proceedings which they had mentioned.

The President informed the Judicial Services Department of the Ministry of Justice of Ms Terrazzoni's conduct. On 7 November 2008 the Minister of Justice requested the National Legal Service Commission (CSM) to suspend Ms Terrazzoni temporarily from duty. By decision of 18 December 2008 the CSM

temporarily suspended Ms Terrazzoni from her duties at the Toulon TGI pending a final decision in the disciplinary proceedings. Ms Terrazzoni lodged an appeal on points of law which was declared inadmissible by the *Conseil d'État*.

On 20 February 2009 the Justice Minister referred Ms Terrazzoni's case to the CSM. Ms Terrazzoni submitted grounds of nullity in relation to the administrative disciplinary proceedings, concerning in particular the conduct of the administrative investigation and the admissibility in evidence of the tapped telephone conversation.

On 5 May 2010 the CSM imposed on Ms Terrazzoni the penalty of compulsory retirement. By decree of 30 August 2010 the French President ordered Ms Terrazzoni's removal from office. In February 2011 the Director of Judicial Services dismissed an appeal lodged by Ms Terrazzoni. The *Conseil d'État* declared inadmissible an appeal on points of law by Ms Terrazzoni against the CSM's decision.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court observed that the interference in question had been “in accordance with the law” within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention. In the light of Articles 100 et seq. of the Code of Criminal Procedure, Ms Terrazzoni could have foreseen that her remarks were liable to be intercepted when the conversations of one of her contacts were being monitored. If those remarks gave grounds to suppose that she had been involved in an offence, they could be transcribed and the resulting record could be used in the context of criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

As to the purpose and necessity of the interference, the Court considered that it had been aimed at establishing the truth both in relation to the initial criminal proceedings against F.L. and in relation to the ancillary criminal proceedings concerning Ms Terrazzoni. The interference had therefore pursued the aim of preventing disorder. The continuation of the interference by means of the use of the conversation in question in the context of the disciplinary proceedings against Ms Terrazzoni had pursued the same legitimate aim.

The Court observed that in the present case the interception complained of had resulted from the tapping of F.L.'s telephone line rather than that of Ms Terrazzoni. The fact that Ms Terrazzoni was a judge had not been known at the time. The special procedural safeguards to which she claimed entitlement had subsequently been applied as soon as her status had been discovered. The Court saw no evidence in the present case of abuse of process or of any abuse consisting in tapping F.L.'s telephone as an indirect means of listening in on Ms Terrazzoni's conversations. The Court noted that the telephone tapping had been ordered by a judge and carried out under the latter's supervision and that the conversation of 6 September 2008 had been transcribed subsequently in connection with a preliminary investigation, at the request of a judge and under his supervision.

While there was no basis for finding that the telephone tapping had been reviewed by the courts in the context of the criminal proceedings against F.L., the Court noted that Ms Terrazzoni had been given an opportunity to present her account of the telephone conversation in question to the President of the Aix-en-Provence Court of Appeal, and on several subsequent occasions to the Judicial Services Inspectorate in the context of the administrative investigation, to an investigator in the criminal proceedings and, lastly, to the rapporteur appointed by the CSM in the context of the disciplinary investigation.

The Court further noted that Ms Terrazzoni had been notified of the letters rogatory ordering the tapping of F.L.'s telephone. These had enabled the CSM to conclude that the tapping operation had been carried out in the course of criminal proceedings not involving Ms Terrazzoni and that the evidence had been added to the case file in the proper manner and had been the subject of adversarial argument. Lastly,

in the context of Ms Terrazzoni's appeal on points of law, the Conseil d'État had examined her ground of appeal concerning the lawfulness of the telephone tapping and had considered that it was not such as to warrant admitting the appeal.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8.

**104. Eur. Court of HR, Mustafa Sezgin Tanrikulu v Turkey, judgment of 18 July 2017, application no. 27473/06. The applicant complained that the Turkish Court's decision authorising the interception of his communications had been unlawful and in violation of Article 8 of the Convention because of its indiscriminate nature. The Court found a violation of Article 8.**

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**no. 27473/06**

**18.07.2017**

### **MUSTAFA SEZGIN TANRIKULU v. TURKEY**

The authorisation of interception of the applicant's communications was not 'in accordance with the law', giving rise to a violation of the Convention

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, who was born in 1963, is a member of the Turkish Parliament. At the time of the events giving rise to the present application he was the president of the Diyarbakır Bar Association. On 2 June 2005 the daily newspaper *Hürriyet* reported statements by a senior intelligence officer, who claimed that the National Intelligence Agency of Turkey ("MİT") had been intercepting the telephone conversations and email correspondence of a number of people on the basis of approximately ninety court decisions over the previous ten years. The intelligence officer stated that the surveillance had been continuous until March 2005, when the MİT had stopped it in order to wait for the entry into force of the new Criminal Code. However, when a bomb attack had occurred in March in Kuşadası, killing a police superintendent, the MİT had gone to the Sixth Division of the Diyarbakır Assize Court ("the Diyarbakır Assize Court") to seek permission for the interception of communications.

In a decision dated 6 May 2005, relying on Article 22 of the Constitution and sections 2, 4, 11 and 16 of Law no. 4422, the Diyarbakır Assize Court had granted the MİT permission to monitor and examine all electronic communications in order to identify and arrest terrorist suspects with international connections as well as to collect evidence and to prevent crime by having early intelligence of it. The MİT had obtained permission to intercept all domestic or international telephone calls and communications provided between 8 April and 30 May 2005 by national telecommunications company Türk Telekom, private mobile network operators and Internet providers and to obtain information contained in SMS, MMS, GPRS and fax communications, as well as caller IDs, correspondents' IP addresses and all other communication-related information.

On 6 June 2005, after reading the article, the applicant filed a criminal complaint with the Diyarbakır Principal Public Prosecutor's Office against the judge, S.T., who had delivered the Assize Court decision in question, the public prosecutor, the MİT agents who had sought permission to monitor and examine communications, and the MİT agents who had implemented the decision. Relying on a number of newspaper and online articles, the applicant alleged that S.T. had decided that the records of all domestic and international electronic communications between 8 April and 30 May 2005 should be given

to the MİT by the telecommunications companies. The judge had made that decision in complete disregard of the legislation then in force and without carrying out any research or requiring proof. The impugned decision had been of a very general nature since it had not included the names of any suspects or indicated the date, location or address of people whose communications would be intercepted. As a consequence, any person, including himself, who had used a landline or mobile telephone to communicate between the above-mentioned dates, had been a victim of the impugned decision.

On 20 June 2005 the Diyarbakır Principal Public Prosecutor decided to disjoin the case concerning the MİT officials and to register it separately because the prosecution of MİT officials required the Prime Minister's permission. On 30 September 2005 the Diyarbakır Principal Public Prosecutor decided not to prosecute the MİT officials who had implemented the Diyarbakır Assize Court's decision. He decided that the MİT officials had merely implemented the court's decision when intercepting and examining communications and that the implementation of court decisions was required by law and did not constitute a crime. In any event, there was no evidence that the telecommunications companies had given any records to the MİT officials or that they had monitored communications over the Internet. The Public Prosecutor also referred to a decision by the Ankara Principal Public Prosecutor not to prosecute over the same issue (decision no. 2005/35575, 17 June 2005) in relation to a number of other complaints brought against the Diyarbakır Assize Court's decision.

On 25 October 2005 the applicant filed an objection with the Siverek Assize Court against the above decision, alleging that the Diyarbakır Public Prosecutor had failed to carry out an investigation into his complaints concerning an alleged violation of his rights guaranteed by Articles 8 and 13 of the Convention. On 30 November 2005 the Siverek Assize Court dismissed the applicant's objection.

### **Law – Article 8**

In *Roman Zakharov*, the Court clarified the conditions for a claim by an applicant that he or she was the victim of a violation occasioned by the mere existence of secret surveillance measures, or legislation permitting such measures. Firstly, the Court will take into account the scope of the legislation permitting the secret surveillance measures by examining whether the applicant could possibly be affected by it, either because he or she belongs to a group targeted by the contested legislation or because the legislation directly affects all users of communication services by instituting a system where any person can have his or her communications intercepted. Secondly, the Court will take into account the availability of remedies at the national level and will adjust the degree of scrutiny depending on the effectiveness of such remedies.

In the present case, the Court observes at the outset that the applicant did not complain in general about the existence of legislation allowing secret surveillance measures. The basis of the applicant's complaint was the specific decision by the Diyarbakır Assize Court to allow the interception of the communications of anyone in Turkey. Furthermore, for the reasons set out above, the Turkish law in force at the material time did not provide for effective remedies for a person who suspected that he or she had been subjected to secret surveillance measures outside criminal proceedings as a result of domestic court decisions authorising such measures. In view of the above, the applicant can claim to be a victim of the contested surveillance measures, which constituted an interference with Article 8.

The Court reiterates that the basis of the applicant's complaint is related to the Diyarbakır Assize Court's specific decision giving permission for the interception of the communications of everyone in Turkey. The Court notes in that respect that the Government argued that the measure in question had been based on Law no. 4422. The applicant contested that argument by submitting that the impugned decision had been manifestly contrary to the conditions set out in the provisions of Law no. 4422 and the principles developed in the Court's case-law. The Court has to examine whether the impugned

decision of the Sixth Division of the Diyarbakır Assize Court complied with the conditions set forth in Law no. 4422. That assessment is necessary in order to determine whether Law no. 4422 could be relied upon as a legal basis in the present case.

In that connection, the Court first observes that Law no. 4422 required that an interception authorisation had to, where the authorities had such information, specify the persons who are suspected of committing crimes listed in that law. The Court further observes that under Section 10 of the Regulation for the Implementation of Law No. 4422, the monitoring or interception of communications had to be authorised in respect of a specific person. It appears therefore that the decision had to include at least one specific name or elements allowing for the identification of a person in order to meet the above-mentioned requirement.

The Court points out once again that the Diyarbakır Assize Court sought to authorise the interception of the communications of everyone in the Republic of Turkey. The decision therefore mentioned no specific names or any addresses, telephone numbers or other relevant information. In other words, the impugned decision was not limited to people suspected of the criminal offences listed in Law no. 4422. Secondly, the Court notes that section 2 of Law no. 4422 required that authorisation for interception be given only when there were strong indications of a crime set out in that provision. However, the impugned decision did not contain any findings or any other indicators in that regard. Rather, it simply made reference to the criminal offences or activities listed in Law no. 4422 and did not specify which factors had been taken into account for the authorities' determining that there were strong indications those crimes had been committed, which is an indispensable element for granting an interception authorisation.

Thirdly, the Court notes that Law no. 4422 provided that interception take place only when the identification or arrest of a perpetrator and the collection of evidence was not possible by any other means. In other words, the interception authorisation had to show that other methods of collecting evidence were not possible. However, the Court observes that the impugned decision did not include any explanation as to why and in what way more lenient measures would have been ineffective for the aims sought to be achieved. No actual details were provided based on the specific facts of the case and the particular circumstances indicating a probable cause to believe that the aims in question could not be achieved by other, less intrusive, means. Having regard to the above considerations, the Court is of the view that the impugned decision did not satisfy the very basic requirements laid down by Law no. 4422. It therefore rejects the Government's argument that Law no. 4422 constituted a legal basis for the Diyarbakır Assize Court's decision.

Notwithstanding the above findings, the Court will further examine whether the MİT had the authority to intercept telephone communications at the material time. On that point, the Court starts by noting that Turkish law distinguishes two types of interception of electronic communications. The first is preventive interception, which is conducted before the commission of a crime and which is now regulated by section 6 of Law no. 2937. The second is the interception of electronic communications during an investigation or prosecution conducted in relation to a crime, which is regulated by Article 135 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, although at the time of the impugned decision it was governed by Law no. 4422. That said, the Court observes that neither Law no. 4422 nor any other legislation regulated the MİT when it came to the preventive interception of telephone communications at the material time. On the basis of the foregoing, the Court concludes that the interception order in the instant case was not "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8

## Article 41 (Just Satisfaction)

The respondent State is to pay the applicant, within three months from the date on which the judgment becomes final in accordance with Article 44 § 2 of the Convention., the following amount, to be converted into the currency of the respondent State at the rate applicable at the date of settlement: EUR 1,200 plus any tax that may be chargeable to the applicant, in respect of costs and expenses

**105. Eur. Court of HR, *Bărbulescu v. Romania*, judgment of 5 September 2017, application no. 61496/08. The case concerned the decision of a private company to dismiss an employee after monitoring his electronic communications and accessing their contents, and the alleged failure of the domestic courts to protect his right to respect for his private life and correspondence. The Court concluded that the national authorities had not adequately protected Mr Bărbulescu's right to respect for his private life and correspondence. They had consequently failed to strike a fair balance between the interests at stake.**

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**no. 61496/08**  
**05.09.2017**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **BĂRBULESCU v. ROMANIA**

Monitoring of an employee's electronic communications amounted to a breach of his right to private life and correspondence

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant was employed as a sales engineer and at his employer's request, for the purpose of responding to customers' enquiries, he created an instant messaging account using Yahoo Messenger. He already had another personal Yahoo Messenger account. His employer's internal regulations prohibited the use of company resources for personal purposes, a rule of which the applicant was aware. The applicant was informed that his Yahoo Messenger communications had been monitored and that there was evidence that he used the internet for personal purposes, in breach of the internal regulations. He was subsequently informed that the employer had also monitored the content of his communications, providing evidence that the applicant's correspondence included personal messages to his brother and fiancée. Consequently, the applicant was dismissed from work.

The applicant argued that an employee's telephone and email communications were covered by the notion of 'private life' and 'correspondence' within the meaning of art 8 ECHR, submitting that his dismissal was unlawful and that by monitoring his communications and accessing their contents without his knowledge, the employer had infringed criminal law. In addition to his allegedly unfair dismissal, the applicant claimed he had been subject to harassment from his colleagues by virtue of the disclosure of the content of his correspondence to those involved in the dismissal procedure.

Mr Bărbulescu challenged his employer's decision before the courts, complaining that the decision to terminate his contract was null and void as his employer had violated his right to correspondence in accessing his communications in breach of the Constitution and Criminal Code. His complaint was unsuccessful. Relying in particular on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life, the home and correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights, Mr Bărbulescu complained that his employer's decision to terminate his contract after monitoring his electronic communications and

accessing their contents was based on a breach of his privacy and that the domestic courts failed to protect his right to respect for his private life and correspondence.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court confirmed that Article 8 was applicable in Mr Bărbulescu's case, concluding that his communications in the workplace had been covered by the concepts of "private life" and "correspondence". It noted in particular that, although it was questionable whether Mr Bărbulescu could have had a reasonable expectation of privacy in view of his employer's restrictive regulations on internet use, of which he had been informed, an employer's instructions could not reduce private social life in the workplace to zero. The right to respect for private life and for the privacy of correspondence continued to exist, even if these might be restricted in so far as necessary.

While the measure complained of, namely the monitoring of Mr Bărbulescu's communications which resulted in his dismissal, had been taken by a private company, it had been accepted by the national courts. The Court therefore considered that the complaint was to be examined from the standpoint of the State's positive obligations. The national authorities had been required to carry out a balancing exercise between the competing interests at stake, namely Mr Bărbulescu's right to respect for his private life, on the one hand, and his employer's right to take measures in order to ensure the smooth running of the company, on the other.

As to the resulting question of whether the national authorities had struck a fair balance between those interests, the Court first observed that the national courts had expressly referred to Mr Bărbulescu's right to respect for his private life and to the applicable legal principles. Notably the Court of Appeal had made reference to the relevant European Union Directive<sup>2</sup> and the principles set forth in it, namely necessity, purpose specification, transparency, legitimacy, proportionality and security. The national courts had also examined whether the disciplinary proceedings had been conducted in an adversarial manner and whether Mr Bărbulescu had been given the opportunity to put forward his arguments. However, the national courts had omitted to determine whether Mr Bărbulescu had been notified in advance of the possibility that his employer might introduce monitoring measures, and of the nature of such measures. The County Court had simply observed that employees' attention had been drawn to the fact that, shortly before Mr Bărbulescu's disciplinary sanction, another employee had been dismissed for using the internet, the telephone and the photocopier for personal purposes. The Court of Appeal had found that he had been warned that he should not use company resources for personal purposes.

The Court considered, following international and European standards, that to qualify as prior notice, the warning from an employer had to be given before the monitoring was initiated, especially where it entailed accessing the contents of employees' communications. The Court concluded, from the material in the case file, that Mr Bărbulescu had not been informed in advance of the extent and nature of his employer's monitoring, or the possibility that the employer might have access to the actual contents of his messages.

As to the scope of the monitoring and the degree of intrusion into Mr Bărbulescu's privacy, this question had not been examined by either of the national courts, even though the employer had recorded all communications of Mr Bărbulescu during the monitoring period in real time and had printed out their contents.

Nor had the national courts carried out a sufficient assessment of whether there had been legitimate reasons to justify monitoring Mr Bărbulescu's communications. The County Court had referred, in particular, to the need to avoid the company's IT systems being damaged or liability being incurred by the company in the event of illegal activities online. However, these examples could only be seen as

theoretical, since there was no suggestion that Mr Bărbulescu had actually exposed the company to any of those risks.

Furthermore, neither of the national courts had sufficiently examined whether the aim pursued by the employer could have been achieved by less intrusive methods than accessing the contents of Mr Bărbulescu's communications. Moreover, neither court had considered the seriousness of the consequences of the monitoring and the subsequent disciplinary proceedings, namely the fact that – being dismissed – he had received the most severe disciplinary sanction. Finally, the courts had not established at what point during the disciplinary proceedings the employer had accessed the relevant content, in particular whether he had accessed the content at the time he summoned Mr Bărbulescu to give an explanation for his use of company resources.

Having regard to those considerations, the Court concluded that the national authorities had not adequately protected Mr Bărbulescu's right to respect for his private life and correspondence and that they had consequently failed to strike a fair balance between the interests at stake.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

#### **Article 41 (just satisfaction)**

The Court held that the finding of a violation constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction for the non-pecuniary damage sustained by Mr Bărbulescu.

#### **Separate Opinions**

Judge Karakaş expressed a partly dissenting opinion. Judges Raimondi, Dedov, Kjølbros, Mits, Mourou-Vikström and Eicke expressed a joint dissenting opinion. These opinions are annexed to the judgment.

**106. Eur. Court of HR, Antović and Mirković v. Montenegro, judgment of 28 November 2017, application no. 70838/13. The case concerned an invasion of privacy complaint by two professors at University of Montenegro’s School of Mathematics, after video surveillance had been installed in areas where they taught. The domestic courts rejected a compensation claim, finding that the question of private life had not been at issue as the auditoriums where the two professors taught were public areas and that the data collected by the video surveillance was also thus not personal data. The Court found that the camera surveillance had not been in accordance with the law and that there had been a violation of Article 8.**

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**no. 70838/13  
28.11.2017**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**ANTOVIĆ AND MIRKOVIĆ v. MONTENEGRO**  
Camera surveillance of lecture halls in Montenegro  
violated professors’ right to privacy

**Basic Facts**

The applicants are Montenegrin nationals who live in Podgorica. In February 2011 the dean of the School of Mathematics announced that he had decided to install surveillance cameras in several areas, including the auditoriums where classes were held. A decision issued later the same month specified that the measure was to protect people and property and to monitor teaching.

The applicants complained to the Personal Data Protection Agency in March, saying the video surveillance and consequent collection of data on them was taking place without their consent. They stated that they knew of no reason to fear for anyone’s safety and that there were other ways to protect people and property. They also asked for the cameras to be removed. Two inspectors from the Agency initially backed the School but after the applicants objected the Agency’s Council ruled that the measure was not in accordance with Montenegro’s Personal Data Protection Act. It held that there had been no good reason for video surveillance as there was no danger to people or property and that the surveillance of teaching was not amongst the justifications for such a measure in the Act. It ordered the cameras to be removed, which was done by late January 2012.

In January 2012 the applicants sought compensation in court, citing Article 8 of the Convention (right to respect for private and family life) and domestic law. However, the domestic courts rejected their claim. They considered that the question of private life had not been at issue and that the data collected by the video surveillance was also thus not personal data.

**Law – Article 8**

The Court began by rejecting the Government’s argument that the case was inadmissible because the two professors’ private lives had not been at issue as the area under surveillance had been a public, working area. The Court noted that it had previously found that “private life” might include professional activities and considered that was also the case with Ms Antović and Mr Mirković. Article 8 was therefore applicable and the case was admissible.

The Court then went on to note that it had held in previous judgments that the notion of private life may include professional activities or activities taking place in a public context and observed that university amphitheatres were teachers’ workplaces, where they not only taught but interacted with students, developing relationships and constructing their social identity. It had previously found covert video surveillance at work to be an intrusion into an employee’s private life and saw no reason to depart from that finding as far as non-covert surveillance at a workplace was concerned. As a consequence, Ms

Antović's and Mr Mirković's private life had been at stake and the camera surveillance had amounted to an interference with their rights.

Furthermore, the domestic courts had not examined the lawfulness of the measure because they had not found in the first place that there were any privacy issues involved. However, the Data Protection Agency had considered it to be an interference and had found that it had not been in accordance with the law. For instance, the domestic legislation had stated that video cameras could be used to monitor areas of access to official premises, however, in this case they had been set up in the amphitheatres.

The domestic law had also provided that surveillance could be carried out if the aim of the measure, such as preventing danger to property or people, could not be achieved in another way. The Data Protection Agency had found no such danger existed while another reason cited for the measure, the surveillance of teaching, was not in the law at all as a justification.

The Court therefore found that the camera surveillance had not been in accordance with the law.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

### **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held by four votes to three that Montenegro was to pay the applicants 1,000 euros (EUR) each in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 1,669.50 in respect of costs and expenses.

**107. Eur. Court of HR, Ben Faiza v. France, judgment of 08 February 2018, application no. 31446/12. The case concerns surveillance measures taken against Mohamed Ben Faiza (geolocation of his vehicle and court order for telephone operator's records) in a criminal investigation into his involvement in drug-trafficking offences.**

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**no. 31446/12**  
**08.02.2018**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **BEN FAIZA v. FRANCE**

Surveillance measures taken against an individual involved in drug trafficking  
before Law of 28 March 2014

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Mohamed Ben Faiza, is a French national who was born in 1982 and lives in La Courneuve (France). He was under pre-trial court supervision at the time his application was examined. From 2009 to 2010 the Ben Faiza brothers were suspected of being involved in large-scale drug trafficking in La Courneuve and were subjected to several surveillance measures.

On 24 July 2009 criminal police officers issued, on the authorisation of the public prosecutor, a court order to a telephone operator to obtain records of incoming and outgoing calls on four telephone lines and the list of cell towers pinged by the mobile telephones. On 10 May 2010 the police were authorised orally by the investigating judge to fasten a tracking device onto a Renault Laguna vehicle used by the Ben Faiza brothers and others involved in the drug trafficking operations.

On 3 June 2010 the investigating judge ordered the installation of a device for the purpose of receiving, fixing, transmitting and recording the conversations of persons using the Renault Laguna vehicle and, under Article 81 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the fixing of a geolocation device onto this vehicle for a period of one month. The data obtained from these measures showed the investigators that the

vehicle had moved to the Netherlands on 9 June 2010 to import drugs. Mr Ben Faiza and his accomplices were thus arrested and taken into custody, subsequently being charged with acquiring, possessing, transporting, offering or disposing of drugs in an organised gang and importing drugs. During the criminal proceedings the applicants challenged the validity of the order issued to the telephone operator and the installation of the geolocation device. In May 2011 the Court of Appeal annulled the first geolocation authorisation of 10 May 2010. However, it considered that the geolocation authorisation of 3 June 2010 was proportionate to the aim pursued since it was targeting a major drug trafficking operation by an organised gang. On 22 November 2011 the Court of Cassation, ruling for the first time on the compatibility of geolocation with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, found in particular that the Court of Appeal had applied the Convention correctly. On 14 December 2012 Mr Ben Faiza was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment and a fine of 100,000 euros. The judgment was quashed on 17 October 2013 for a procedural defect. The criminal proceedings are still pending.

## **Law – Article 8**

### **The geolocation decision of 10 May 2010**

The Court found that by annulling the first geolocation measure the national authorities had provided full redress for the damage alleged by Mr Ben Faiza. This part of the application was thus declared inadmissible.

### **The real-time geolocation decision of 3 June 2010**

The Court observed that the GPS geolocation device and resulting data had enabled the authorities to track Mr Ben Faiza's movements in real time. This measure had been accompanied by the installation of another device to receive and record the conversations of the vehicle's occupants, thus subjecting Mr Ben Faiza to particularly strict surveillance. The Court thus took the view that geolocation by the fixing of a GPS device on Mr Ben Faiza's vehicle, together with the processing and use of the data obtained, constituted an interference with his private life. As to whether the interference was in accordance with the law, the Court noted that Article 81 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP), as applied in the present case, referred merely to a very general notion, namely "acts of information deemed useful for establishing the truth". The Court pointed out that it had already held, in the context of cases about telephone tapping, that Article 81 of the CCP, even when read in conjunction with other provisions of the CCP, did not offer the "foreseeability" required by Article 8 of the Convention. Moreover, it found that the lack of precision of the French law at the material time could not be compensated for by the case-law of the domestic courts, as the judgment of the Court of Cassation, delivered in the present case on 22 November 2011, had been the first ruling on the lawfulness of geolocation measures during a judicial investigation. In any event, even supposing that Article 81 CCP had in itself constituted a legal basis for the geolocation in question; in the Court's view the measure should also have satisfied the criterion of foreseeability and the requirement of sufficient safeguards against the risk of abuse inherent in any covert surveillance system. On this point the Court observed that such safeguards could not be derived from the wording of Article 81 or from domestic case-law. It thus found that in the sphere of real-time geolocation measures, French law (neither statute law nor case-law) did not at the relevant time indicate with sufficient clarity to what extent and how the authorities were entitled to use their discretionary power.

The Court accordingly held that Mr Ben Faiza had not enjoyed the minimum protection afforded by the rule of law in a democratic society and that there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

The Court noted, however, that subsequently, with the Law of 28 March 2014, France had adopted a legislative mechanism governing the use of geolocation and strengthening the right to respect for privacy.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

**Court order issued to a mobile telephone operator on 24 July 2009 for subsequent tracking of movements**

The Court began by noting that the court order had constituted an interference with Mr Ben Faiza's right to respect for his private life since it had enabled the authorities to access and use records containing lists of the calls made and received on three mobile telephones, but also to locate the cell towers pinged by those phones and thus to track Mr Ben Faiza's movements at the time.

The measure was found by the Court to be in accordance with the law (Article 77-1-1 CCP), such court orders being authorised and governed by the relevant statutory framework. It was a fact that Article 77-1-1 was commonly invoked to obtain personal data, but not the content of calls, from telephone operators. There were also safeguards against arbitrariness: such orders had to be authorised beforehand by a prosecutor on pain of nullity, were subject to judicial review – as had been the case here – and the information obtained could be excluded as evidence in the event of any illegality.

Lastly, the Court observed that the order had been aimed at establishing the truth in the context of criminal proceedings for the importing of drugs in an organised gang, criminal conspiracy and money laundering. It had thus pursued the legitimate aims of preventing disorder or crime or protecting public health. It had also been necessary for the purpose of breaking up a major drug-trafficking operation. In addition, the information thus obtained had been used in an investigation and a criminal trial during which Mr Ben Faiza had been guaranteed an effective review consistent with the rule of law and ensuring that the interference was limited to what was "necessary in a democratic society". The court order issued to the telephone operator had not therefore constituted a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held that the finding of a violation of Article 8 was sufficient just satisfaction for the non-pecuniary damage claimed. It also held that France was to pay the applicant 3,500 euros in respect of costs and expenses.

**108. Eur. Court of HR, Libert v. France, judgment of 22 February 2018, application no. 588/13.**  
The case concerned the dismissal of an SNCF (French national railway company) employee after the seizure of his work computer had revealed the storage of pornographic files and forged certificates drawn up for third persons.

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**no. 31446/12**  
**22.02.2018**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **LIBERT v. FRANCE**

An employer may consult files on a work computer unless the employee in question has clearly identified them as “private”

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Eric Libert, is a French national who was born in 1958 and lives in Louvencourt (France). Mr Libert had been working at the French national railway company (SNCF) since 1958, latterly as Deputy Head of the Amiens Regional Surveillance Unit. He had been temporarily suspended from his duties in 2007. On his reinstatement in March 2008, he noted that his work computer had been seized. He was summoned by his superiors and informed that the computer had been found to contain, inter alia, address change certificates drawn up for third persons and bearing the official Surveillance Unit logo, and a large number of files containing pornographic images and films. He was dismissed from his post on 17 July 2008.

Mr Libert applied to the Amiens Industrial Tribunal, which ruled that the decision to dismiss him had been justified. The Amiens Court of Appeal upheld the substance of that judgment. The applicant’s appeal on points of law was dismissed. The Court of Cassation noted, as had the Court of Appeal, that files created by employees using computers provided by their employers were presumed to be professional in nature unless they were identified as “personal”.

#### **Law – Article 8**

As regards the applicability of Article 8, the Court could accept that under certain circumstances, non-professional data, for example data clearly identified as private stored by an employee in a computer supplied by his employer in order to discharge his duties, might be deemed to relate to his “private life”. It noted that the SNCF allowed its staff occasionally to use the computer facilities placed at their disposal for private purposes, subject to compliance with specific rules.

The Government had not disputed the fact that the applicant’s files had been opened on his work computer without his knowledge and in his absence. There had therefore been an interference with Mr Libert’s right to respect for his private life. The SNCF was a public-law entity supervised by the State, which appointed its Director. That entity provided a public service, held a monopoly and benefited from an implicit State guarantee. Those factors conferred on it the status of a public authority within the meaning of Article 8. The present case was therefore distinct from the case of *Bărbulescu v. Romania* [GC], no. 61496/08, 5 September 2017, in which a private-sector employer had infringed the right to respect for private life and private correspondence. Since the interference in this case had been due to a public authority, the complaint had to be analysed from the angle not of the State’s positive obligations but of its negative obligations. At the material time positive law had provided that employers could open files contained in employees’ work computers unless such files had been identified as personal. The interference had therefore had a basis in law, and positive law had specified sufficiently clearly the circumstances and conditions under which such a measure was authorised. The interference had

therefore been geared to guaranteeing the protection of “the rights ... of others”, in this case the rights of employers, who might legitimately wish to ensure that their employees were using the computer facilities which they had placed at their disposal in line with their contractual obligations and the applicable regulations. French law comprised a mechanism to protect private life: although the employer could open any professional files stored in the hard drives of the computers with which he had supplied his employees in the exercise of their functions, he could not surreptitiously open files identified as being personal “unless there was a serious risk or in exceptional circumstances”; he could only open such files in the presence of the employee concerned or after the latter had been duly informed. The domestic courts had applied that principle. They had considered that in the instant case, that principle had not prevented the employer from opening the files at issue, since they had not been duly identified as being private.

The court of appeal had had regard to the finding that the impugned photographs and videos had been found in a file stored in a hard drive under the default name of “D:/données”, which was used by staff to store their work documents and which, on the applicant’s computer, had been titled “D:/données personnelles” (“D:/personal data”). The court had considered that an employee could not have used a whole hard drive, which was supposed to record professional data, for private use and that the generic term “personal data” could have referred to work files being processed personally by the employee and might therefore not have explicitly designated elements related to private life. The court of appeal had accepted the SNCF’s argument that the User’s Charter laid down that private information should be clearly identified as such (“private” option in the Outlook criteria), and that the same applied to “media receiving that information (‘private’ directory)”. Furthermore, the court of appeal held that Mr Libert’s dismissal had not been disproportionate since he had committed a serious breach of the SNCF professional code of ethics and of the relevant internal guidelines. According to the court of appeal, his actions had been particularly serious because, as an official responsible for general surveillance, he would have been expected to set an example.

The Court therefore observed that the domestic courts had properly assessed the applicant’s allegation of a violation of his right to respect for his private life and that those courts’ decisions had been based on relevant and sufficient grounds. Admittedly, in using the word “personal” rather than “private”, Mr Libert had opted for the word which was used in the Court of Cassation’s case-law to the effect that an employer could not, in principle, open files designated “personal” by the employee. However, that did not suffice to call in question the relevance of the reasons given by the domestic courts, since the User’s Charter specifically stated that “private information (had to) be clearly identified as such”.

The domestic authorities had not overstepped the margin of appreciation available to them, and there had therefore been no violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8.

## **Law – Article 6**

The Court of Cassation had previously ruled that employers could only open files identified by employees as being personal in the latter’s presence or after informing them. It had, however, added that files created by an employee were presumed to be professional in nature unless the employee identified them as personal, so that the employer could access them in the employee’s absence. The Court consequently noted that at the material time, positive law had already allowed the employer, within the said limits, to open files stored in an employee’s work computer. The Court consequently concluded that that part of the application was manifestly ill-founded and declared it inadmissible.

**109. Eur. Court of HR, *Benedik v. Slovenia*, judgment of 24 April 2018, application no. 588/13.** The case concerned the Slovenian police's failure to obtain a court order to access subscriber information associated with a dynamic IP address recorded by the Swiss law-enforcement authorities during their monitoring of users of a certain file-sharing network. This led to the applicant being identified after he had shared files over the network, including child pornography. The Court found in particular that the legal provision used by the police to obtain the subscriber information associated with the dynamic IP address had not met the Convention standard of being "in accordance with the law". The provision had lacked clarity, offered virtually no protection from arbitrary interference, had no safeguards against abuse and no independent supervision of the police powers involved. It stated that a finding of a violation of Mr Benedik's rights under the Convention was sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage.

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**no. 62357/14**  
**24.04.2018**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **BENEDIK v. SLOVENIA**

Police's accessing of subscriber information associated with a dynamic IP address needed court order; Slovenian law lacked clarity

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Igor Benedik, is a Slovenian national who was born in 1977 and lives in Kranj (Slovenia). In 2006 police in Switzerland informed their counterparts in Slovenia about a dynamic IP address that was being used in a peer-to-peer file-sharing network, which included the sharing of child pornography pictures or videos.

In August 2006 the Slovenian police asked the local Internet service provider for information about the user who had been assigned that IP address, which the company handed over. The police used a provision of the Criminal Procedure Act which allowed them to request information from an electronic communication provider about the user of a certain means of electronic communication whose details were not available in the relevant directory. The police did not obtain a court order. In December of the same year the police got a court order to obtain information about that user's traffic data.

Although the IP address at first identified Mr Benedik's father as the subscriber to the Internet service in question, it transpired that it was Mr Bendik who used the service himself and had downloaded files with child pornography. He was formally placed under investigation in November 2007. He denied committing any offence and told investigators that he did not know what was on the files. He was convicted in December 2008 of the offence of the display, manufacture, possession or distribution of child pornography.

He made unsuccessful appeals to the Ljubljana Higher Court, the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court. He alleged throughout the domestic proceedings that the evidence about his identity had been obtained unlawfully because the authorities had not had a court order to obtain subscriber information associated with the dynamic IP address in question.

In particular, the Constitutional Court found that such information was in principle protected by constitutional data privacy safeguards but that Mr Benedik had waived his right to protection by revealing his IP address and the content of his communications on the file-sharing network.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court first held that Mr Benedik's interest in having his identity with respect to his online activity protected fell within the scope of the notion of "private life" under the Convention. It went on to assess in particular whether the police's interference with his rights had been "in accordance with the law". That meant that the measure had to have some basis in domestic law; the law had to be accessible; the person affected had to be able to foresee the consequences of his or her actions; and the provision had to be compatible with the rule of law.

The Court found that the provision of the Criminal Procedure Act used by the police to access subscriber information raised no questions as to its accessibility, but it also had to be satisfied that there were sufficient guarantees against abuse. The provision concerned a request for information on the owner or user of a means of electronic communication, however, it had no rules covering the link between a dynamic IP address and subscriber information. In contrast, other legislation laid down rules on the secrecy and confidentiality of electronic communication. For example, Article 37 of the Constitution required a court order for any interference with the privacy of communication. It was not the Court's task to say which piece of legislation should have prevailed, but in examining the domestic judgments it highlighted the constitutional finding on Mr Benedik: access to subscriber information based on his IP address had in principle required a court order, but the Constitutional Court had ultimately found that it had not been necessary to get such an order in Mr Benedik's case as he had effectively waived his right to privacy by revealing his IP address and the contents of his communication on the file-sharing network. However, the Court did not find that decision to be reconcilable with the scope of the right to privacy under the Convention.

In the Court's view, the police should have got a court order and nothing in the law had prevented them from seeking one. In fact, they had obtained a court order subsequently to obtain similar information. In addition, there were at the time no regulations on retaining the relevant data and no safeguards against abuse by State officials in the procedure for accessing and transferring them. No independent supervision of the use of the police's powers in relation to obtaining information from ISPs had existed at the time, although the Court noted that Slovenia had subsequently passed legislation to regulate such matters.

Overall, the Court found that the law used by the police to obtain subscriber information relating to the dynamic IP address had lacked clarity and had not offered sufficient safeguards against arbitrary interference with his Article 8 rights. The interference with Mr Benedik's rights had therefore not been "in accordance with the law" and had led to a violation of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

### **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held that the finding of a violation was sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage Mr Benedik might have suffered. It awarded him 3,522 euros (EUR) in respect of costs and expenses for both the domestic proceedings and those before the Court.

### **Separate opinions**

Judge Yudkivska expressed a concurring opinion, which was joined by Judge Bošnjak, while Judge Vehabović expressed a dissenting opinion. The opinions are annexed to the judgment.

**110. Eur.Court of HR, Centrum FÖR RÄTTVISA v. SWEDEN, judgment of 19 June 2018, application no. 35252/08. The case concerned a complaint brought by a public interest law firm alleging that legislation permitting the bulk interception of electronic signals in Sweden for foreign intelligence purposes breached its privacy rights.**

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**no. 31446/12  
08.02.2018**

Press release issued by the Registrar

## **CENTRUM FÖR RÄTTVISA v. SWEDEN**

Bulk interception of communications in Sweden meets Convention standards

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Centrum för rättvisa, is a non-profit foundation which was set up in 2002 and represents clients in rights litigation, in particular against the State. It is based in Stockholm. The applicant foundation believes that, because of the sensitive nature of its activities, there is a risk that its communications through mobile telephones and mobile broadband has been or will be intercepted and examined by way of signals intelligence.

Signals intelligence can be defined as intercepting, processing, analysing and reporting intelligence from electronic signals. In Sweden the collection of electronic signals is one form of foreign intelligence and is regulated by the Signals Intelligence Act. This legislation authorises the National Defence Radio Establishment (FRA), a Government agency organised under the Ministry of the Defence, to conduct the signals intelligence.

For all signals intelligence, the FRA must apply for a permit to the Foreign Intelligence Court, which is regulated by the Foreign Intelligence Court Act and composed of a permanent judge and other members appointed on four-year terms. The court's activities are in practice covered by complete secrecy. The Foreign Intelligence Court is overseen by the Foreign Intelligence Inspectorate and the Data Protection Authority.

The foundation alleged that Swedish legislation and practice in the field of signals intelligence had violated and continued to violate its rights under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life, the home and the correspondence) of the European Convention. It had not brought any domestic proceedings, arguing under Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) that there was no effective remedy in Sweden for its Convention complaints.

### **Law – Article 8**

Even though the applicant foundation had not exhausted domestic remedies and could not give a concrete example of its communications having been intercepted, the Court nonetheless considered it justified for it to examine the Swedish legislation on signals intelligence. This was because there was, in practice, no remedy in Sweden providing detailed grounds in response to a complainant who suspected that his or her communications had been intercepted and the legislation amounted to a system of secret surveillance that potentially affected all users of mobile telephones and the Internet, without their being notified. The mere existence of the legislation amounted in itself to an interference with the foundation's rights under Article 8.

The Court found that it was clear that the surveillance system, as it stood at the present moment in time, had a basis in domestic law and was justified by national security interests.

Indeed, given the present-day threats of global terrorism and serious cross-border crime, as well as the increased sophistication of communications technology, the Court held that Sweden had considerable power of discretion (“wide margin of appreciation”) to decide on setting up such a system of bulk interception.

The State’s discretion in actually operating such an interception system was, nevertheless, narrower and the Court had to be satisfied that there were adequate and effective guarantees against abuse. Following a careful assessment of the minimum safeguards that should be set out in law to avoid abuse of power, as developed in its case-law (see the 2014 Grand Chamber judgment *Roman Zakharov v. Russia*), the Court was of the opinion that the system revealed no significant shortcomings in the system’s structure and operation.

Overall, while the Court found certain shortcomings in the system, notably the regulation of the communication of personal data to other States and international organisations and the practice of not giving public reasons following a review of individual complaints, it noted that the regulatory framework had been reviewed several times with a view notably to enhancing protection of privacy and that it had in effect developed in such a way that it minimised the risk of interference with privacy and compensated for the lack of openness of the system.

More specifically, the scope of the interception (which was only permitted for communications crossing the Swedish border and not within Sweden itself) and the treatment of intercepted data were clearly defined in law; the duration of the measures were clearly regulated (any permit is valid for a maximum of six months and renewal requires a review); the authorisation procedure was detailed and entrusted to a judicial body, the Foreign Intelligence Court; there were several independent bodies, in particular the Foreign Intelligence Inspectorate and the Data Protection Authority, tasked with the supervision and review of the system; and, on request the inspectorate had to investigate individual complaints of intercepted communications, as did the Parliamentary Ombudsmen and the Chancellor of Justice.

The Court therefore found that the Swedish system of signals intelligence provided adequate and sufficient guarantees against arbitrariness and the risk of abuse. The relevant legislation met the “quality of law” requirement and the “interference” established could be considered as being “necessary in a democratic society”. Furthermore, the structure and operation of the system were proportionate to the aim sought to be achieved.

There had accordingly been no violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

Given those findings, the Court considered that there were no separate issues under Article 13 and held that there was no need to examine the foundation’s complaint in that respect.

**Conclusion:** no violation of article 8

**111. Eur. Court of HR, Vincent Del Campo v. Spain, judgment of 6 November 2018, application no. 25527/13** The case concerned a domestic judgement which named Mr Vicent Del Campo as having harassed a work colleague, although the defendant in the case was actually his local authority employer: violation of Article 8.

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no. 25527/13  
06.10.2018

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **VINCENT DEL CAMPO v. SPAIN**

Individual's right to respect for reputation infringed by court judgment on harassment case against local authority

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Fernando Vicent Del Campo, is a Spanish national who was born in 1957 and lives in Villavente (Spain).

While working in the León School of Arts and Crafts as a teacher and head of department, Mr Vicent Del Campo was accused of harassment by a colleague. An administrative complaint by the colleague was initially dismissed and she filed a claim for compensation with the Department of Education of the Regional Government of Castilla-León. The authorities did not decide on the issue within the time-limit and the colleague began court proceedings in January 2007.

In November 2011 the High Court of Justice of Castilla-León found against the Regional Administration and ordered it to pay the colleague 14,500 euros. The court concluded that the public administration was liable as the colleague had suffered harassment and the education authority had not done anything to prevent it. The court's judgment included Mr Vicent Del Campo's name several times and said it had established that he had harassed and bullied his colleague.

In December 2011 Mr Vicent Del Campo requested access to the case file and to become a party to the proceedings, stating that he had learnt of the judgment through the local press. The domestic courts refused his request to be a party to the proceedings, stating that in such cases it was the public administration alone which was the defendant, even if a particular public official could be identified and his or her conduct judged. The Constitutional Court rejected a right of fair trial appeal by Mr Vicent Del Campo, finding that it had not duly justified its constitutional significance.

Relying on Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial), Mr Vicent Del Campo complained that he had not been made a party to the liability proceedings against the public administration, despite him having a direct interest in defending himself against serious allegations of harassment in the workplace.

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private life) and Article 13 (right to an effective remedy), Mr Vicent Del Campo complained that the High Court judgment stating that he had committed harassment, in proceedings in which he was not a party, had amounted to an unjustified interference with his right to honour and reputation, and that he had had no effective remedies available to him in that regard.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court noted that the concept of private life extended to a person's reputation and honour. The High Court judgment of November 2011 against the public administration had identified Mr Vicent Del Campo by name and had found his actions to amount to harassment and bullying.

However, he had not been aware of the proceedings, which had come after the initial claim by the colleague had been dismissed several years earlier, and was not a party to them. The Court therefore found that identifying Mr Vicent Del Campo in the judgment had amounted to an interference with his right to privacy.

In looking at whether that interference had been justified, the Court observed that there was a public interest in ensuring the transparency of court proceedings and that publishing the reasoning of the domestic court's decision could have aimed at protecting the rights of the colleague by acknowledging the facts of harassment in the workplace.

At the same time, the domestic court had not confined itself to dealing with the strict liability of the public administration, it had also named Mr Vicent Del Campo and described his conduct as repeated psychological harassment. The domestic ruling had thus stigmatised him and was likely to have had a major impact on his professional standing, honour and reputation.

However, naming Mr Vicent Del Campo had not been supported by cogent reasons. The court had had discretion to omit his name or use only his initials and it was not clear why it had not done that.

In fact, the Constitutional Court of Spain and the Strasbourg Court itself followed that practice. Mr Vicent Del Campo had only found out about the judgment from the local press, a discovery which came more than five years after the initial administrative complaint had been dismissed by the education authorities. He had not been summoned, questioned or notified in any other way about the colleague's court claim, meaning that he had had no opportunity to request non-disclosure in the judgment. The interference with his right to privacy had not been accompanied by sufficient safeguards.

Given the fact that all such judgments were in principle made public and that disclosure was regulated by court registrars rather than the courts themselves, the High Court of Justice should have done more in the first place to protect Mr Vicent Del Campo's privacy rights.

Overall, the Court found that the interference with Mr Vicent Del Campo's right to respect for his private life had not been properly justified and there had been a violation of Article 8.

## **Conclusion; violation of Article 8**

Article 41 (Just Satisfaction): The Court held that Spain was to pay the applicant 12,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 9,268.60 in respect of costs and expenses.

112. *Eur Court of HR, Big Brother Watch v. the United Kingdom*, judgment of 13 September 2018, applications nos. 58170/13, 62322/14 and 24960/15, concerned complaints by journalists and rights organisations about three different surveillance regimes: (1) the bulk interception of communications; (2) intelligence sharing with foreign governments; and (3) the obtaining of communications data from communications service providers. The bulk interception regime violated Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to respect for private and family life/communications) as there was insufficient oversight both of the selection of Internet bearers for interception and the filtering, search and selection of intercepted communications for examination, and the safeguards governing the selection of “related communications data” for examination were inadequate. In reaching this conclusion, the Court found that the operation of a bulk interception regime did not in and of itself violate the Convention, but noted that such a regime had to respect criteria set down in its case-law.

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nos. 58170/13, 62322/14 and 24960/15  
13.09.2018

Press release issued by the Registrar

## **BIG BROTHER WATCH v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Some aspects of UK surveillance regimes violate Convention

### **Basic Facts**

The three joined applications are *Big Brother Watch and Others v. the United Kingdom* (no. 58170/13); *Bureau of Investigative Journalism and Alice Ross v. the United Kingdom* (no. 62322/14); and *10 Human Rights Organisations and Others v. the United Kingdom* (no. 24960/15). The 16 applicants are organisations and individuals who are either journalists or are active in campaigning on civil liberties issues.

The applications were lodged after Edward Snowden, a former US National Security Agency (NSA) contractor, revealed the existence of surveillance and intelligence sharing programmes operated by the intelligence services of the United States and the United Kingdom.

The applicants believed that the nature of their activities meant that their electronic communications and/or communications data were likely to have been intercepted or obtained by the UK intelligence services.

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life and correspondence), the applicants complained about the regimes for the bulk interception of communications, intelligence sharing and for the acquisition of data from communications service providers.

The second and third applications also raised complaints under Article 10 (freedom of expression) related to their work, respectively, as journalists and non-governmental organisations.

The third application relied in addition on Article 6 (right to a fair trial), in relation to the domestic procedure for challenging surveillance measures, and on Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) combined with Articles 8 and 10, alleging the regime for the bulk interception of communications

discriminated against people outside the United Kingdom, whose communications were more likely to be intercepted and, if intercepted, selected for examination.

## **Law – Article 8**

### **Interception process under section 8(4) of RIPA**

The Court noted that the bulk interception of communications was regulated by section 8(4) of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000.

Operating a bulk interception scheme was not per se in violation of the Convention and Governments had wide discretion (“a wide margin of appreciation”) in deciding what kind of surveillance scheme was necessary to protect national security. However, the operation of such systems had to meet six basic requirements, as set out in *Weber and Saravia v. Germany*. The Court rejected a request by the applicants to update the *Weber* requirements, which they had said was necessary owing to advances in technology.

The Court then noted that there were four stages of an operation under section 8(4): the interception of communications being transmitted across selected Internet bearers; the using of selectors to filter and discard – in near real time – those intercepted communications that had little or no intelligence value; the application of searches to the remaining intercepted communications; and the examination of some or all of the retained material by an analyst.

While the Court was satisfied that the intelligence services of the United Kingdom take their Convention obligations seriously and are not abusing their powers, it found that there was inadequate independent oversight of the selection and search processes involved in the operation, in particular when it came to selecting the Internet bearers for interception and choosing the selectors and search criteria used to filter and select intercepted communications for examination.

Furthermore, there were no real safeguards applicable to the selection of related communications data for examination, even though this data could reveal a great deal about a person’s habits and contacts. Such failings meant section 8(4) did not meet the “quality of law” requirement of the Convention and could not keep any interference to that which was “necessary in a democratic society”. There had therefore been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

Acquisition of data from communications service providers under Chapter II of RIPA The Court noted that the second set of applicants had complained that Chapter II of RIPA allowed a wide range of public bodies to request access to communications data from communications companies in various ill-defined circumstances.

It first rejected a Government argument that the applicants’ application was inadmissible, finding that as investigative journalists their communications could have been targeted by the procedures in question. It then went on to focus on the Convention concept that any interference with rights had to be “in accordance with the law”.

It noted that European Union law required that any regime allowing access to data held by communications service providers had to be limited to the purpose of combating “serious crime”, and that access be subject to prior review by a court or independent administrative body. As the EU legal order is integrated into that of the UK and has primacy where there is a conflict with domestic law, the Government had conceded in a recent domestic case that a very similar scheme introduced by the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 was incompatible with fundamental rights in EU law because it did not include these safeguards. Following this concession, the High Court ordered the Government to amend the relevant provisions of the Act. The Court therefore found that as the Chapter II regime also lacked

these safeguards, it was not in accordance with domestic law as interpreted by the domestic authorities in light of EU law. As such, there had been a violation of Article 8.

### **Intelligence sharing procedures**

The Court found that the procedure for requesting either the interception or the conveyance of intercept material from foreign intelligence agencies was set out with sufficient clarity in the domestic law and relevant code of practice. In particular, material from foreign agencies could only be searched if all the requirements for searching material obtained by the UK security services were fulfilled. The Court further observed that there was no evidence of any significant shortcomings in the application and operation of the regime, or indeed evidence of any abuse.

### **Law – Article 10**

The Court declared complaints by the third set of applicants under this provision to be inadmissible but found a violation of the rights of the second set of applicants, who had complained that the bulk surveillance regimes under section 8(4) and Chapter II of RIPA did not provide sufficient protection for journalistic sources or confidential journalistic material.

In respect of the bulk interception regime, the Court expressed particular concern about the absence of any published safeguards relating both to the circumstances in which confidential journalistic material could be selected intentionally for examination, and to the protection of confidentiality where it had been selected, either intentionally or otherwise, for examination. In view of the potential chilling effect that any perceived interference with the confidentiality of journalists' communications and, in particular, their sources might have on the freedom of the press, the Court found that the bulk interception regime was also in violation of Article 10.

When it came to requests for data from communications service providers under Chapter II, the Court noted that the relevant safeguards only applied when the purpose of such a request was to uncover the identity of a journalist's source. They did not apply in every case where there was a request for a journalist's communications data, or where collateral intrusion was likely. In addition, there were no special provisions restricting access to the purpose of combating "serious crime". As a consequence, the Court also found a violation of Article 10 in respect of the Chapter II regime.

### **Law – Article 6**

The third set of applicants complained that the IPT lacked independence and impartiality. However, the Court noted that the IPT had extensive power to consider complaints concerning wrongful interference with communications, and those extensive powers had been employed in the applicants' case to ensure the fairness of the proceedings. Most notably, the IPT had access to open and closed material and it had appointed Counsel to the Tribunal to make submissions on behalf of the applicants in the closed proceedings. Furthermore, the Court accepted that in order to ensure the efficacy of the secret surveillance regime, which was an important tool in the fight against terrorism and serious crime, the restrictions on the applicants' procedural rights had been both necessary and proportionate and had not impaired the essence of their Article 6 rights. Overall, the applicants' complaint was manifestly ill-founded and had to be rejected.

### **Law – Others articles**

The third set of applicants complained under Article 14, in conjunction with Articles 8 and 10, that those outside the United Kingdom were disproportionately likely to have their communications intercepted as the law only provided additional safeguards to people known to be in Britain. The Court rejected this

complaint as manifestly ill-founded. The applicants had not substantiated their argument that people outside the UK were more likely to have their communications intercepted. In addition, any possible difference in treatment was not due to nationality but to geographic location, and was justified.

**Conclusion: no violation of Article 8** by the intelligence sharing regime.

**Article 41 (Just satisfaction):**

The applicants did not claim any award in respect of pecuniary or non-pecuniary damage and the Court saw no reason to make one. However, it made partial awards in respect of the costs and expenses claimed by the applicants in the first and second of the joined cases. The applicants in the third joined case made no claim for costs and expenses.

**Separated opinions:**

Judges Pardalos and Eicke expressed a joint partly dissenting and partly concurring opinion, and Judge Koskelo, joined by Judge Turković, expressed a partly concurring, partly dissenting opinion. These opinions are annexed to the judgment.

**113. Eur. Court of HR, Aliyev v. Azerbaijan, judgment of 20 September 2018, application no. 68762/14. The case concerned the detention of a lawyer and human rights activist on charges including illegal entrepreneurship, embezzlement and tax evasion.**

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No.68762/14  
20.09.2018

Press release issued by the Registrar

**ALIEV v. AZERBAIJAN**

Court finds rights violations in case of human rights lawyer

**Basic Facts**

Mr Aliyev is a well-known human rights lawyer who has represented applicants before the Strasbourg Court. He is also chairman of an officially registered association called the Legal Education Society. In June 2014 he presented a report on the side-lines of a Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly session on the human rights situation in Azerbaijan.

In May 2014 the Prosecutor General's Office opened a case on alleged financial irregularities at various non-governmental organisations, including Mr Aliyev's association. In August he was charged with illegal entrepreneurship, large-scale tax evasion and aggravated abuse of power.

The investigator in the case stated that Mr Aliyev had failed to inform the authorities that he had become head of a legal entity – his association – and had omitted to register grants from donors. He had also signed agreements on various sums without legal authority and had deposited money and made payments to himself and others in the guise of salaries and service fees. Mr Aliyev had thus, according to the authorities, conducted illegal entrepreneurial activity, had profited from that and had avoided paying tax.

He was arrested and remanded in custody for three months, with his appeals against detention being dismissed. His home and his association's office were also searched. Documents and various objects were seized, including case files on applications to the Court. The domestic courts rejected his complaints that those measures had been unlawful.

In December 2014 the Prosecutor General's Office brought new charges: high-level embezzlement, forgery by an official and very large-scale tax evasion. He was convicted in April 2015 and given a sentence of seven and a half years' imprisonment, reduced to a five-year suspended sentence in March 2016, when he was released from detention. His trial is the subject of a separate application.

Relying on Article 2 (right to life) and Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment), Mr Aliyev complained that that the state of his health had not been compatible with detention and that he had not been given adequate medical treatment while there. He also complained under Article 3 about the conditions of his detention and the conditions of his transport to court.

Mr Aliyev raised a complaint under Article 5 §§ 1 and 3 (right to liberty and security/absence of a reasonable suspicion/lack of relevant and sufficient reasons for continued detention) and Article 5 § 4 (decision on lawfulness of detention/review of detention). He further complained about the search of his home and the association's office under Article 8 (right to respect for privacy and family life), while under Article 18 (limitation on use of restrictions on rights) he alleged that his rights had been restricted for purposes other than those prescribed in the Convention.

Lastly, he complained that his arrest and detention had breached his rights under Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association).

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court highlighted the especially strict scrutiny required when it came to the searching of lawyers' premises as the persecution and harassment of members of the legal profession struck at the very heart of the Convention system.

The Court found in particular that the domestic court had allowed the search on vague grounds, without mentioning any facts related to the specific crimes of abuse of power and forgery. It did not appear that the court had satisfied itself that there were reasonable suspicions against Mr Aliyev and that relevant evidence might be found at his office and home.

Overall, the search had not pursued any of the legitimate aims set out under Article 8 to justify an interference with someone's private life and there had been a violation of this provision.

The Court found in particular that this case was part of "a troubling pattern of arbitrary arrest and detention of critics of the Government, civil society activists and human rights defenders".

It called on the Government to take steps to protect such people, ensuring that there were no more retaliatory prosecutions and misuse of the criminal law against them.

Conclusion: violation of Article 3, 5§1, 5§4, 8 and 18

114. *Eur. Court of HR, Khadija Ismayilova v. Azerbaijan, judgment of 10 January 2019*, application no. 65286/13. The case concerned an alleged smear campaign against a well-known journalist, Khadija Rovshan qizi Ismayilova. In particular, she was sent a letter threatening her with public humiliation if she did not stop her investigative reporting. When she refused, a “sex video” filmed without her knowledge of her and her then boyfriend was posted on the Internet. Around the same time, newspapers ran stories accusing her of anti-government bias and immoral behaviour. She later discovered hidden cameras all over her flat. The Court took particular note of reports of journalists in Azerbaijan being persecuted and the perceived climate of impunity for such acts. In sum, the Court found that the Azerbaijani authorities had failed to comply with their positive obligation under Article 8 to protect the applicant’s private life on account of the significant shortcomings in the investigation and the overall length of the proceedings in her case. Also, the authorities had also failed to comply with their positive obligation to protect the applicant’s freedom of expression under Article 10.

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no. 65286/13  
10.01.2019

Press release issued by the Registrar

**Khadija Ismayilova v. Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijani authorities failed to investigate serious invasion of well-known  
Investigative journalist’s privacy

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Khadija Rovshan qizi Ismayilova, is an Azerbaijani national who was born in 1976 and lives in Baku. She has worked as an investigative journalist since 2005, reporting in particular for Azadliq Radio (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty). Her work has often been highly critical of the Government. In particular between 2010 and 2012 she investigated and reported on alleged corruption by the Azerbaijani President’s family.

In March 2012 Ms Ismayilova received a threatening letter with still pictures taken from a video of her and her then boyfriend having sexual intercourse. The video had been filmed in the bedroom of her flat with a hidden camera. and data wires used to transmit footage from the cameras.

The prosecuting authorities launched criminal proceedings over the threatening letter and the covert filming. Several procedural steps were taken, including questioning Ms Ismayilova and granting her request to take a formal statement from the telephone engineer (an employee of Stateowned Baktelekom) who admitted that he had been ordered to install a second telephone line in Ms Ismayilova’s flat and to trace wires to it. Between April 2012 and August 2013, the authorities also ordered an expert examination of the threatening letter’s postal packaging, the pictures it contained and the wires found in the flat.

In response to Ms Ismayilova’s public complaints about the alleged ineffectiveness of the investigation, the prosecuting authorities published a status report in April 2012 noting that they had questioned a number of witnesses, including Ms Ismayilova’s boyfriend, friends, colleagues and members of her family.

Ms Ismayilova immediately lodged a civil claim, arguing that the report had disclosed information on her private life, namely the full names and occupations of her friends, colleagues and family, as well as her home address and the identity of the boyfriend who had featured in the video.

Her claim was dismissed, as were all her subsequent appeals. The courts found in particular that the purpose of the report had been to counter the possibility of people forming a negative opinion about the prosecuting authorities on account of Ms Ismayilova's complaints in public about the ineffectiveness of their investigation into her case.

Between 2013 and 2014, Ms Ismayilova lodged a number of unsuccessful complaints with the domestic courts, alleging that the prosecuting authorities were delaying the investigation and, in response to her enquiries, had only vaguely indicated that the investigation was still ongoing. Ms Ismayilova has another application (no. 30778/15) with the European Court concerning her arrest and detention in 2014 for large-scale misappropriation and tax evasion as well as abuse of power when working for Azadliq Radio. She was partially acquitted in 2016 and released.

### **Law – Article 8**

Concerning the threatening letter, secret filming and posting of intimate videos online, the Court found, on the one hand, that it had not been possible to establish “beyond reasonable doubt” that the State itself had been responsible for the very serious invasion of Ms Ismayilova's privacy. Her arguments had been based on circumstantial evidence or on assertions requiring corroboration and further investigation.

On the other hand, the State had had a duty under Article 8 of the Convention to investigate acts which had been an affront to Ms Ismayilova's human dignity. Her receipt of a threatening letter, the unauthorised entry into her flat to install wires and video cameras, the covert filming of the most intimate aspects of her private life in the sanctity of her home and the subsequent public humiliation through the dissemination of the video footage, had constituted a serious, flagrant and extraordinarily intense invasion of her private life.

However, there had been significant flaws and delays in the manner in which the authorities had investigated the case. That was despite the fact that the offences committed against Ms Ismayilova had been the result of an apparently carefully planned and executed operation involving a coordinated effort by a number of individuals, giving several obvious leads.

First, the Government had only submitted copies of decisions ordering procedural steps, without showing whether those steps had actually been carried out. Nor did they submit any formal record of the questioning of a very important witness, the Baktelekom engineer, who could have shed light on who had been giving him orders. Indeed, according to Ms Ismayilova, the investigator present at an encounter she had arranged with the engineer at her flat, just after she had discovered the hidden cameras and wires, had actively avoided recording his statements.

Furthermore, there was no material in the case file to show that the threatening letter with still pictures, apparently sent from Moscow, had been investigated. A formal request could have been made to the Russian authorities, for example.

Another immediate investigative step could also have been to identify the owners and/or operators of the two websites used to post the videos online and to determine the source of the videos and the identity of their uploaders.

Most importantly, no line of inquiry was developed to see if there had been a link between the fact that Ms Ismayilova was a well-known investigative journalist highly critical of the Government and the series of criminal acts committed against her.

Notwithstanding Ms Ismayilova's complaints, no progress had been made in the investigation after August 2013.

In sum, the Court found that the Azerbaijani authorities had failed to comply with their positive obligation under Article 8 to protect the applicant's private life on account of the significant shortcomings in the investigation and the overall length of the proceedings in her case.

Concerning the publication of personal information in the report on the status on the investigation, Ms Ismayilova complained about the excessive and superfluous disclosure of sensitive private details in the status report. The Court found that the public disclosure of such information had clearly constituted an interference with her privacy rights and had not been justified.

Other than arguing that the purpose of the status report had been "to inform the public about the progress of the investigation", the Government had not explained what legitimate purpose had been served by publishing the address and identity of the partner of someone who had been secretly and unlawfully filmed in the privacy of their own home while having sexual intercourse.

Indeed, given that the investigation itself had concerned an unjustified and flagrant invasion into her private life, the authorities should have exercised more care so as not to compound the breach of her rights.

#### **Law – Article 10**

Concerning the failure to protect freedom of expression, the Court took note of the fact that the threatening letter received by Ms Ismayilova had been related to her professional journalistic activity. It also had regard to reports on the general situation in Azerbaijan concerning journalists, notably their alleged persecution, including actual physical attacks, and the perceived climate of impunity for those responsible. Ms Ismayilova herself had expressed the fear that she had been the victim of a campaign orchestrated against her in retaliation for her journalistic work.

In such a situation, the State had not just been required to take measures to protect her from intrusion into her private life, but also had a duty under Article 10 of the Convention to protect her freedom of expression. However, as the Court had found, the criminal investigation had been flawed and delayed, and the situation had been compounded by the articles published in allegedly pro-government newspapers and the authorities publicly disclosing information relating to her private life for no apparent reason. That had been contrary to the spirit of an environment protective of journalism. Thus, the authorities had also failed to comply with their positive obligation to protect the applicant's freedom of expression under Article 10.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8 and violation of article 10

#### **Article 41 (Just satisfaction)**

The Court held that Azerbaijan was to pay Ms Ismayilova 15,000 euros (EUR) in respect of nonpecuniary damage and EUR 1,750 in respect of costs and expenses.

**115. Eur. Court of HR, X v. ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’, judgment of 17 January 2019, application no. 29683/16. The case concerned administrative proceedings in which the applicant, who is transgender, had sought to have the sex/gender marker on the birth certificate changed. Relying in particular on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), X complained of the absence of a regulatory framework for legal gender recognition and the arbitrary imposition of a requirement for genital surgery. Violation of Article 8 - on account of the lack of a regulatory framework ensuring the right to respect for the applicant’s private life.**

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**no. 29683/16  
17.01.2019**

**Press release issued by the Registrar**

**X v. THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

Proceedings in which a transgender person sought to have the birth certificate changed

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, X, is a Macedonian national who was born in 1987 and lives in Skopje. The case concerned administrative proceedings in which the applicant, who is transgender, had sought to have the sex/gender marker on the birth certificate changed.

At birth X was registered as a girl, with a clearly female name. From an early age X became aware that he was male rather than female. In 2010 X went to a specialist clinic in Belgrade, where a psychologist and sexologist diagnosed him with “trans-sexuality”. X started taking hormones to increase his testosterone levels, as recommended by the clinic. In June 2011 X applied for a change of his first and family name. The Ministry of the Interior allowed that application, registering X under a clearly male forename and issued X with a new identity card. However, the sex/gender marker and numerical personal code remained the same, identifying X as a female. In July 2011 X requested to have the sex/gender marker and the numerical personal code on his birth certificate corrected to indicate that he was male. However, the Ministry of Justice (“the Ministry”) dismissed X’s application on the grounds that there was no official document showing the applicant had changed gender.

X appealed to the Ministry, alleging that there was no statutory provision that regulated the matter. Sex reassignment surgery was unavailable in his home country and unjustified in his case. Furthermore, such a requirement would subject him to unwanted medical treatment and sterilisation. He argued that he had already been diagnosed as transsexual, which was sufficient to obtain legal gender recognition. In October 2011 the Ministry dismissed the appeal, but in February 2013 the Administrative Court quashed the Ministry’s decision.

In June 2013 X underwent a double mastectomy (breast removal) in Belgrade and continued his hormone therapy. In the resumed proceedings, the authorities instructed the Forensic Institute to examine X and it found that he should be provided with a document attesting to his new sex. However, in December 2014 the Ministry again dismissed his request to alter the sex/gender marker in the birth register as it had still not obtained “evidence of an actual change of sex”. Fresh proceedings before the Administrative Court are still ongoing.

## Law – Article 8

X submitted reports from 2012 and 2016 showing that the protracted procedure on the legal recognition of his gender identity has had negative consequences on his mental health and life. Relying in particular on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), X complained of the absence of a regulatory framework for legal gender recognition and the arbitrary imposition of a requirement for genital surgery.

**Conclusion: violation of Article 8** - on account of the lack of a regulatory framework ensuring the right to respect for the applicant's private life.

Article 41 (Just Satisfaction); 9,000 euros (EUR) for non-pecuniary damage.

**116. Eur. Court of HR Catt v. United Kingdom, judgement of 24 January 2019, application no. 43514/15.** The case concerned the applicant's complaint about the collection and retention of his personal data in a police database for "domestic extremists". The Court found in particular that the data held on the applicant concerned his political views and that such information required particular protection. The Court also had regard to Mr Catt's age, (he is now 94), and the fact he had no history or prospect of committing acts of violence. While collecting the information on him had been justified, retaining it had not, particularly owing to a lack of safeguards, such as time-limits. There had therefore been a violation of the Convention.

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**no. 43514/15**  
**24/01/2019**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **CATT v. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Unjustified retention of personal data of a lifelong activist in an extremism database

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, John Oldroyd Catt, is a British national who was born in 1925 and lives in Brighton (the United Kingdom).

Mr Catt is a lifelong peace activist and a regular attendee at demonstrations of various kinds. In 2005 he began to take part in protests by a group called Smash EDO against the Brighton factory of US arms company EDO MBM Technology Ltd. The protests involved disorder and a large police presence. Mr Catt himself has never been convicted of any offence.

In March 2010 he made a request to the police under the Data Protection Act 1998 for any information being held about him. The police disclosed 66 entries collected from March 2005 to October 2009, mostly related to Smash EDO, but also concerning 13 other demonstrations and events. These included attendance at a Trades Union Congress conference in Brighton in 2006, at a demonstration at a Labour Party conference in 2007 and a pro-Gaza meeting in 2009.

The information was held in a police database concerning "domestic extremism" and was contained in records on other individuals and in reports which mentioned him incidentally. The entries usually recorded his name, presence at an event, date of birth, address, and sometimes his appearance. In

August 2010 Mr Catt asked the Association of Chief Police Officers (“ACPO”) to delete the entries which mentioned him, but ACPO declined to do so.

Mr Catt complained about the police’s retention of his personal data. Mr Catt sought judicial review, arguing that retaining the data was not “necessary” within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 of the European Convention. In May 2012 the High Court held that Article 8 was not engaged and, even if it were, the interference had been justified. Mr Catt won in the Court of Appeal which found the retention of his data had been disproportionate but in March 2015 the Supreme Court, by four votes to one, upheld an appeal by ACPO and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

### **Law – Article 8**

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life, the home, and the correspondence), The Supreme Court stated that retaining the data had been in accordance with the law and proportionate. In particular, the invasion of privacy had been minor, the court noting that the information obtained was already in the public domain and was not intimate or sensitive.

There were also good policing reasons why such data had to be collected and retained, even if it concerned protesters with no criminal record and with no likelihood of being violent. Furthermore, there was no prospect of the information being given to third parties, such as employers, or used for political purposes, and the data was periodically reviewed for retention or deletion.

In answering questions put by the Court in its communication of the case, the Government stated that they had found four more entries on Mr Catt than had originally been disclosed; the police could not provide an explanation for why the reports had not been revealed earlier.

The Court expressed concern about aspects of the provisions for collecting personal data in the database, particularly the lack of a clear definition of “domestic extremism”, but it focussed on whether there had been a justification for interfering with Mr Catt’s rights by holding data on him.

The lack of safeguards included the absence of a time-limit on how long data should be kept, the only definite rule being that information would be held for a minimum of six years before being reviewed. In Mr Catt’s case it was not clear that such six-year or other reviews had taken place. This also contrasted with privacy resolutions passed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which indicated that there should be maximum time-limits for holding certain kinds of information. The Court was also concerned about the effectiveness of legal challenge as a safeguard in this case because the police had actually held more data on Mr Catt at the time of the domestic proceedings than previously acknowledged.

In any event, the usefulness of the safeguard of a review was questionable as the decision to retain information on him had not had regard to the heightened protection for data revealing a person’s political opinion.

Lastly, the Court rejected a Government argument that it would be too difficult to review and delete all the data on Mr Catt as the extremism database was not automated. In fact, domestic guidance showed that review and deletion had been intended and had actually occurred for some of the data in Mr Catt’s case.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8.

**Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

Mr Catt made no claim for just satisfaction, stating that the finding of a violation would be sufficient, and the Court thus found no call to make an award. It held that the United Kingdom was to pay him 27,000 euros (EUR) in respect of costs and expenses for the proceedings in Strasbourg.

**117. Eur. Court of HR, Mifsud v. Malta, judgement of 29 January 2019, application no. 62257/15.**

**The case concerned Mr Mifsud's complaint about being ordered by a court to undergo a DNA test in a contested paternity case. The Court found that the domestic courts had fairly balanced Mr Mifsud's rights and those of a woman, X, who was trying to establish that he was her father. In particular, the courts had examined Mr Mifsud's objections to taking the test in a first-instance civil court and at two levels of constitutional jurisdiction, eventually finding against him and ordering the procedure to take place. No violation of Article 8.**

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no. 62257/15

29.01.2019

Press release issued by the Registrar

**MIFSUD v. MALTA**

Man ordered to take DNA test in disputed paternity test not a violation of the right to privacy

**Basic Facts**

The applicant, Francesco Saverio Mifsud, is a British national who was born in 1925 and lived in Dublin (Ireland). He passed away in December 2017 and the application has been pursued by his widow. In December 2012 a woman, X, began court proceedings to have Mr Mifsud declared her biological father and for this to be put on her birth certificate.

The applicant denied paternity and X asked the court to order him to take a DNA test, as provided for by the Civil Code in such cases. Mr Mifsud objected, arguing that forcing him to take the test would breach his rights under Article 8 of the European Convention and asking for the question to be referred to the constitutional jurisdictions.

Both the Civil Court (First Hall) in its constitutional competence and the Constitutional Court dismissed Mr Mifsud's claim.

The Constitutional Court referred in particular to X's right to know who her father was and found that Mr Mifsud would not suffer any humiliation in having to take the test, which was by way of a mouth swab. The DNA procedure was eventually carried out.

The applicant complained that Maltese law made a genetic test mandatory in paternity proceedings and that it was imposed on him against his will, in breach of Article 8 (right to respect for privacy of the home and family life).

**Law – Article 8**

The Court focussed on whether the domestic courts had achieved the required balance between Mr Mifsud's wish to refuse to provide the DNA sample, a procedure which was an interference with his rights to respect for his private life, and those of X to uncover the truth about an important aspect of her identity. The Court emphasised that in such cases it examined the specific effects of domestic legislation on an applicant, rather than the law itself in the abstract. Mr Mifsud had argued that the domestic

legislation failed to respect the principle of equality of arms owing to the timing of the order to provide the DNA sample – it came at the beginning of paternity proceedings before either side had presented a case for or against the need for such a test.

The test determined the issue and meant in effect providing self-incriminating evidence.

The Court did not agree that Mr Mifsud had been ordered to undergo the test before being able to submit evidence. Both he and X had made submissions to the civil court, which had then delayed a decision until his objections had been settled at two levels of constitutional jurisdiction. Even after the civil court issued the order, he had been able to try to challenge the outcome of the test.

The Court rejected Mr Mifsud's arguments about self-incrimination, even if such tests were conclusive in paternity disputes. What was important was that he had been able to participate in the proceedings, presenting arguments and examining witnesses. Such tests did not contradict the rule of law and natural justice, particularly given the legitimate aim in this case of the State fulfilling its duty to X under Article 8.

Partly accepting Mr Mifsud's argument that the test was in theory mandatory, which, as the Constitutional Court had found, could raise an issue under Article 8, the Court nevertheless found that in practice that was unlikely to be the case, for example, if there was no prima facie case for it.

In addition, in the case of Mr Mifsud, the issue had been determined after a thorough examination by the domestic courts, which had not shown any signs of being arbitrary or unfair.

Overall, the domestic courts had struck a fair balance when weighing up Mr Mifsud's interests and those of X and there had been no violation of Article 8.

**Conclusion: no violation of Article 8.**

**118. Eur. Court of HR, *Beghal v. the United Kingdom*, judgment of 28 February 2019, application no. 4755/16. Power of border control officials to stop and question without suspicion or access to lawyer: violation of article 8.**

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**No. 4755/16  
28.02.2019**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**BEGHAL v. the UNITED KINGDOM**

Power of border control officials to stop and question without suspicion or access to lawyer: violation

### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, a French national, was ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom. Her husband, also a French national, was in custody in France in relation to terrorist offences. Following a visit to her husband, the applicant was stopped at East Midlands airport and questioned under Schedule 7 to the Terrorism Act 2000. She and her luggage were searched. The applicant refused to answer most of the questions put to her. The applicant was subsequently charged with, among other things, wilfully failing

to comply with a duty under Schedule 7. Schedule 7 empowered police, immigration officers and designated customs officers to stop, examine and search passengers at ports, airports and international rail terminals. Questioning had to be for the purpose of determining whether the person appeared to be concerned or to have been concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism. No prior authorisation was required and the power to stop and question could be exercised without suspicion of involvement in terrorism.

## **Law – Article 8**

The principal question was whether the safeguards provided by domestic law sufficiently curtailed the powers under Schedule 7 so as to offer the applicant adequate protection against arbitrary interference with her right to respect for her private life.

(a) The geographic and temporal scope of the powers – Schedule 7 powers were wide in scope, having permanent application at all ports and border controls. That did not, in itself, run contrary to the principle of legality. Ports and border controls would inevitably provide a crucial focal point for detecting and preventing the movement of terrorists and/or foiling terrorist attacks. Indeed, all States operated systems of immigration and customs control at their ports and borders, and while those controls were different in nature to the Schedule 7 powers, it was nevertheless the case that all persons crossing international borders could expect to be subject to a certain level of scrutiny.

(b) The discretion afforded to the authorities in deciding if and when to exercise the powers – Examining officers enjoyed a very broad discretion, since “terrorism” was widely defined and the Schedule 7 powers could be exercised whether or not he or she had objective or subjective grounds for suspicion. A requirement of reasonable suspicion was an important consideration in assessing the lawfulness of a power to stop and question or search a person; however, there was nothing to suggest that the existence of reasonable suspicion was, in itself, necessary to avoid arbitrariness. Rather, that was an assessment to be made having regard to the operation of the scheme as a whole and the absence of a requirement of reasonable suspicion by itself did not render the exercise of the power in the applicant’s case unlawful. There was clear evidence that the Schedule 7 powers had been of real value in protecting national security. Were “reasonable suspicion” to be required, terrorists could avoid the deterrent threat of Schedule 7 by using people who had not previously attracted the attention of the police; and the mere fact of a stop could alert a person to the existence of surveillance.

It was important to distinguish between the two distinct Schedule 7 powers, being the power to question and search a person; and the power to detain a person. As the applicant had not been formally detained, the Court’s examination was limited to the lawfulness of the power to question and search. It was relevant that the Schedule 7 power – and in particular the power to question and search – was a preliminary power of inquiry expressly provided in order to assist officers stationed at ports and borders to make counterterrorism inquiries of any person entering or leaving the country. While there was no requirement of “reasonable suspicion”, guidance was nevertheless provided to examining officers. The decision to exercise Schedule 7 powers had to be based on the threat posed by the various active terrorist groups and be based on a number of other considerations, such as, for example, known or suspected sources of terrorism and possible current, emerging and future terrorist activity.

(c) Any curtailment on the interference occasioned by the exercise of the powers – At the time the applicant had been examined, Schedule 7 had provided that a person detained under that power had to be released not later than the end of a period of nine hours from the beginning of the examination. At the beginning of the examination, the examining officer had to explain to the person concerned either verbally or in writing that he or she was being examined under Schedule 7 and that officers had the power to detain him or her should he or she refuse to co-operate and insist on leaving. A record had to be kept of the examination; at the port, if the examination lasted less than one hour, or centrally, if it

lasted longer. However, despite the fact that persons being examined were compelled to answer the questions asked, neither the Terrorism Act nor the Code of Practice in force at the relevant time made any provision for a person being examined (who was not detained) to have a solicitor in attendance. Consequently, persons could be subjected to examination for up to nine hours, without any requirement of reasonable suspicion, without being formally detained, and without having access to a lawyer.

(d) The possibility of judicial review of the exercise of the powers – While it was possible to seek judicial review of the exercise of the Schedule 7 powers, it appeared from domestic cases that the absence of any obligation on the part of the examining officer to show “reasonable suspicion” had made it difficult for people to have the lawfulness of the decision to exercise the power judicially reviewed.

(e) Any independent oversight of the use of the powers – The use of the powers was subject to independent oversight by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation.

The significance of the role lay in its complete independence from government, coupled with access based on a very high degree of clearance to secret and sensitive national security information and personnel. Nevertheless, his reviews were invariably ad hoc and insofar as he was able to review a selection of examination records, he would not be in a position to assess the lawfulness of the purpose for the stop. Moreover, while his reports had been scrutinised at the highest level, a number of important recommendations had not been implemented. In particular, the Independent Reviewer had repeatedly called for the introduction of a suspicion requirement for the exercise of certain Schedule 7 powers, including the power to detain and to download the contents of a phone or laptop; and criticised the fact that answers given under compulsion were not expressly rendered inadmissible in criminal proceedings. Therefore, while of considerable value, the oversight of the Independent Reviewer was not capable of compensating for the otherwise insufficient safeguards applicable to the operation of the Schedule 7 regime.

**119. *Eur. Court of HR, Visy v. Slovakia*, judgment of 18 March 2019, application no. 70288/13. Re-seizure of unlawfully seized materials five minutes after their restitution. Violation of Article 8, as the re-seized materials contained business-related information and included legal advice protected by lawyer-client privilege. As the domestic authorities had failed to provide relevant and sufficient reasons for dismissing the applicant’s complaints in relation to the re-seizure, in which respect he had not had the benefit of effective safeguards against arbitrariness and abuse, the re-seizure could not be seen as having been proportionate to the legitimate aim it pursued, and thus necessary in a democratic society.**

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no. 70288/19  
18.03.2019

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **VISY V. SLOVAKIA**

Re-seizure of unlawfully seized materials five minutes after their restitution

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, an Austrian national and businessman, had an office in Bratislava (Slovakia). In 2009 that office had been searched by the Public Prosecution Service of Slovakia (“the PPS”) at the request of the Austrian prosecution service. Business documents and electronic storage media had been seized and handed over to the Austrian authorities. The Constitutional Court subsequently found that the terms of the warrant had been exceeded and ordered the restitution of the unlawfully seized items. At 9.10

a.m. on 7 March 2012 those items were restored to the applicant's lawyer and, at 9.15 a.m., they were re-seized. The applicant's complaints to the PPS were dismissed and his complaint before the Constitutional Court was declared inadmissible.

### **Law – Article 8**

It had not been disputed that the re-seized materials contained business-related information and included legal advice protected by lawyer-client privilege. The re-seizure had been based on a letter rogatory issued by the Austrian prosecution service. There was no indication that at any stage in Austria or in Slovakia had it been ordered, endorsed, supervised or reviewed by a court. In so far as the assessment of the applicant's case by the PPS had been later reviewed by the Constitutional Court, the scope of its review had been limited in two respects. First, the Constitutional Court had not reviewed the re-seizure as such. Rather, it had reviewed the assessment of the re-seizure by the PPS. Second, as the Constitutional Court had specifically pointed out, its review had been limited to issues of constitutionality, as opposed to lawfulness.

The applicant had contended that since the seizure had taken place immediately after the items in question had been returned to his lawyer, he had been deprived of the opportunity to confer with him and, by extension, of the possibility of properly exercising his rights. The Court noted that the summons for the handover of the material to be returned to the applicant had been relevant solely to its restitution to him and bore no reference to any re-seizure that was in fact to follow. Thus, the authorities' reasoning that it had been the applicant's free choice not to take part in person in the handover of the items to be restored and that, consequently, he could not complain of not being able to exercise his rights properly in person could not be accepted on the facts since the applicant had had no knowledge that the items would be seized again and accordingly could not have had any choice as to whether to participate in person or not. The reasoning provided by the domestic authorities in that respect could not therefore be considered relevant and sufficient. Furthermore, the applicant's argument that the media that had been seized again contained legal advice protected by lawyer-client privilege did not appear to have been addressed at all by the PPS or the Constitutional Court.

The Court noted that the re-seizure had been merely a preliminary measure with a view to making use of the re-seized items in the main proceedings in Austria and that, had those items actually been transmitted to the Austrian authorities, it might have been open to the applicant to assert his rights and interests before them as appropriate. However, the Convention was intended to guarantee rights and freedoms that were practical and effective as opposed to ones that were theoretical or illusory. Therefore, in relation to the re-seizure, Slovakia remained bound by Article 1 of the Convention to secure the applicant his rights under the rights and freedoms defined in the Convention and its Protocols.

As the domestic authorities had failed to provide relevant and sufficient reasons for dismissing the applicant's complaints in relation to the re-seizure, in which respect he had not had the benefit of effective safeguards against arbitrariness and abuse, the re-seizure could not be seen as having been proportionate to the legitimate aim it pursued, and thus necessary in a democratic society.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8 (unanimously)

### **Article 41**

(Just Satisfaction): EUR 2,000 in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

120. *Eur. Court of HR, Høiness v. Norway, judgement of 19 March 2019*, application no. 43624/14. The case concerned the domestic courts' refusal to impose civil liability on an Internet forum host after vulgar comments about Ms Høiness had been posted on the forum. The Court found in particular that the national courts had acted within their discretion ("margin of appreciation") when seeking to establish a balance between Ms Høiness's rights under Article 8 and the opposing right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the news portal and host of the debate forums.

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no. 43624/14  
19.03.2019

Press release issued by the Registrar

### HØINESS v. NORWAY

The domestic courts' refusal to impose liability on an Internet forum for anonymously posted comments was not in breach of Article 8

#### Basic Facts

The applicant, Mona Høiness, is a Norwegian national who was born in 1958 and lives in Oslo (Norway). Ms Høiness, who is a well-known lawyer, began civil proceedings before the Oslo City Court in May 2011 against the Hegnar Media AS company and Mr H., an editor working for the Internet portal *Hegnar Online*, for defamation. She stated that her honour had been infringed because of sexual harassment in three comments made anonymously in *Hegnar Online*'s forum, which was incorporated into Hegnar Media AS. The defendants argued that they had not been aware of the comments and that they had been removed as soon as they had become aware of them. In January 2012 the City Court ruled in favour of the defendants. It held that the comments in question had not amounted to unlawful defamation as they had been incapable of offending either Ms Høiness's honour or her reputation.

Ms Høiness appealed. The High Court held in October 2013 that Ms Høiness's claim for compensation could not succeed unless the defendants had acted with sufficient culpability. In that regard it noted, amongst other things, that there were "warning buttons" on the website, which readers could click on in order to react to comments. The High Court also upheld the City Court's decision on litigation costs and awarded the defendants 183,380 Norwegian kroner (approximately 20,050 euros). Ms Høiness appealed but leave to appeal to the Supreme Court was refused.

Relying on Article 8, Ms Høiness complained that the Norwegian authorities had violated her rights under the Convention by not sufficiently protecting her right to protection of her reputation and by requiring her to pay litigation costs to the extent seen in her case.

#### Law – Article 8

The Court reiterated that a person's right to protection of his or her reputation was encompassed by Article 8.

It further observed that what was at issue in the case was not an act by the State but the alleged inadequacy of the protection afforded by the domestic courts to Ms Høiness's private life. In addition to a negative obligation there might be positive obligations inherent in effective respect for private life.

As concerns competing interests under Article 8 and Article 10, the Court had established general principles, as summarised in *Delfi AS v. Estonia*. The Court would usually afford a wide margin if the State was required to strike a balance between competing interests or competing Convention rights. In making this proportionality assessment, the Court had also identified specific aspects of freedom of expression as being relevant, such as the context of the comments, the measures applied by the company in order to prevent or remove defamatory comments, the liability of the actual authors of the comments as an alternative to the intermediary's liability, and the consequences of the domestic proceedings for the company.

The Court noted that the comments made about Ms Høiness had been found by the City Court not to constitute defamation under national law, while the High Court had deemed it unnecessary to take a stand on whether they were defamatory or not. The Court also considered that it was not obliged to examine the nature of the comments in depth as they in any event did not amount to hate speech or incitement to violence.

Secondly, the Court saw no reason to contest Ms Høiness's allegation that she would have faced considerable obstacles in attempting to pursue claims against the anonymous individuals who had written the comments. As to the context in which the comments were made, the Court observed that the debate forums had not been particularly integrated in the presentation of news and thus had not appeared to be a continuation of editorial articles.

With respect to the measures adopted by *Hegnar Online*, there had been an established system of moderators who monitored content. Moreover, readers had the possibility to click on "warning buttons", and warnings by other means, such as email, had also been successful. In the instant case, one of the comments had even been deleted on the moderator's own initiative before receipt of notification by Ms Høiness's counsel. The High Court had found, upon an overall examination and assessment of the measures that had been put in place in order to monitor the forum comments, and the specific responses to Ms Høiness's notifications, that the news portal company and its editor had acted appropriately. The Court observed that Ms Høiness's case had been considered on its merits at two levels of domestic jurisdiction. The courts had reviewed all the relevant aspects. In line with the principles set out in *Delfi AS v. Estonia*, there were no reasons for the Court to substitute a different view for that of the national courts.

The Court found accordingly that the domestic courts had acted within their margin of appreciation when seeking to establish a balance between Ms Høiness's rights under Article 8 and the opposing right to freedom of expression under Article 10 of the news portal and host of the debate forums. The Court further noted the considerable amount of litigation costs imposed on Ms Høiness. However, taking account of the nature of the claim lodged before the national courts and the subject matter, the Court did not consider that it could call into question the domestic courts' assessment on costs. The Court was in any event satisfied that the domestic courts had sufficiently safeguarded Ms Høiness's rights under Article 8 and there had been no violation of that provision.

**Conclusion:** no violation of Article 8.

**121. Eur. Court of HR, Širvinskas v. Lithuania, judgement of 23 July 2019, application no. 21243/17. The case concerned court proceedings which had determined a child's temporary and then permanent place of residence in a divorce case.**

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No. 21243/17  
23/07/2019

Press release issued by the Registrar  
**Širvinskas v. Lithuania**

An interim decision was made without an examination of both parties claims, so there was violation of article 8.

**Basic facts**

The applicant is a Lithuanian national. In June 2010 Mr Širvinskas married I. In September 2010 their daughter P. was born. Until November 2013 they lived in Mr Širvinskas's parents' house in Karmélava. On 9 November 2013 Mr Širvinskas called the police and told them that he and his wife were having a dispute and that she had decided to leave their home and take their daughter with her. According to Mr Širvinskas, the police ordered him to allow his wife to take their daughter with her, but the parents agreed that she would live with each of them in turn until they reached a permanent decision. In December 2013 I. filed a petition for divorce before the District Court, asking that P. should temporarily reside with her until a final decision and a residence order had been adopted. A day later Mr Širvinskas asked the court for a residence order in his favour and for P. to temporarily reside with him until then. He submitted that from her birth until her departure with I., P. had lived in his parents' house and was used to it. He also submitted arguments as to why that house was better suited to the child's needs. However, the courts stated that those arguments would be addressed at a later stage, when making a residence order. In January 2014 the courts ruled that P.'s habitual place of residence should not be changed without good reasons and thus she should temporarily reside with her mother. An appeal by Mr Širvinskas was dismissed in April 2014. The District Court's decision in the divorce proceedings, including a residence order, was delivered in November 2015. That court, and later an appellate court, found that the girl had already been living with her mother for two years and was used to the apartment she had been living in, and that changing her place of residence again would be harmful. They therefore made a residence order in favour of I. An appeal on points of law was rejected by the Supreme Court in December 2016. Relying in particular on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights, Mr Širvinskas complained about the courts' decisions concerning P.'s residence in favour of his former wife.

**Law -Article 8**

The Court observes that both at the stage of the proceedings concerning interim measures and at the stage of the issuance of the residence order the applicant raised various arguments to support his contention that P. should live with him, such as her strong attachment to him, his parents and his home; the material conditions at his home; and his favourable work schedule. The courts that made the decisions on interim measures refused to examine the substance of those arguments, stating that P.'s attachment to her parents and the suitability of their homes would be assessed later. However, at the stage of the issuance of the residence order, the courts held that both parents were capable of ensuring adequate conditions and that there were thus no grounds to change P.'s habitual place of residence, which at that time was with I. It is not for the Court to determine what weight the applicant's arguments should have had, or what would have been the most appropriate stage of the proceedings at which to examine them. It reiterates, however, that in such cases Article 8 of the Convention requires the domestic courts to conduct an in-depth examination of the entire family situation and of a whole series

of relevant factors. In the present case, the applicant found himself in a situation in which an interim decision was made without an examination of the merits of his arguments, and with the passage of time that interim decision determined the final outcome of the case, as a result of which his arguments were no longer relevant. The Court therefore considers that the proceedings in the applicant's and I.'s divorce case, taken as a whole, were incompatible with his right to respect for his family life under Article 8 of the Convention. There has accordingly been a violation of that provision.

#### **Article 14 taken in conjunction with Article 8**

The Court has already found that both the applicant and his ex-wife were considered to be equally capable of caring for their daughter and ensuring adequate living conditions for her; as a result, the residence order was made relying essentially on the girl's habitual place of residence. The courts which determined first the temporary and later the permanent place of residence of the applicant's daughter emphasised the need to ensure safety and stability for a young child and not to change her habitual place of residence without important reasons. The Court takes note of the conclusions adopted by the Kaišiadorys psychological centre which stated that P. was "likely to suffer anxiety when separated from [her] mother" and that it was "unquestionably essential to fulfil [P.'s] need to live with her mother" and about which the applicant complained to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson. However, none of the courts which determined P.'s place of residence relied on those conclusions or made any statements implying that the mother was more important to the child than the father. Therefore, although the Court has criticised the proceedings in which those decisions were adopted, it is unable to discern any difference of treatment on account of gender in the decisions adopted by the domestic authorities. It therefore concludes that the complaint under Article 14 of the Convention, taken in conjunction with Article 8, is manifestly ill-founded and must be declared inadmissible in accordance with Article 35 §§ 3 (a) and 4 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8, no violation of article 14 taken in conjunction with Article 8.

#### **122. Eur. Court of HR, Izmestyev v. Russia, judgment of 27 August 2019, application no.74141/10. The case concerned video surveillance of offenders serving a sentence of imprisonment.**

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**No. 74141/10**  
**27.08.2019**

Press release issued by the Registrar

#### **IZMESTYEV v. RUSSIA**

Several violations of the Convention in respect of a life prisoner, including video surveillance of his cell

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Igor Izmestyev, is a Russian national. He is detained in Solikamsk.

In 2007, Mr. Izmestyev was suspected of being involved as a member of an organised gang in a murder committed in 2001. He was arrested and remanded in custody. Subsequently, the charges against him were completed. He was charged with several offences committed between 1994 and 2006, including forming and directing an organized gang, seven murders and acts of terrorism, as well as an attempt to pass on a bribe. On numerous occasions in the course of the proceedings, the domestic courts prolonged his detention.

The Court of First Instance of the European Communities, in its judgment, has made a provisional ruling, justifying its decisions, inter alia, by the seriousness of the charges brought against it.

In 2009, after the preliminary hearing, the court decided to hold the trial in camera, considering that the public nature of the proceedings could reveal a state secret or other information.

In 2010, the court found Mr. Izmestyev guilty of the charges against him and sentenced him to life imprisonment.

On 6 November 2011, the applicant was placed in the penal colony to serve his life sentence.

The complainant states that the cell in which he was placed was equipped with a video surveillance system operating 24 hours a day and that he was constantly monitored, either directly by a guard or by means of video surveillance.

## **Law – Article 8**

### Access and Contact with the Outside World

The Court notes that within the penal colony, Mr Izmestyev, as a life-sentenced prisoner, was subjected to the strict detention regime. From 6 November 2011 to 25 November 2013, he was able to maintain relations with the outside world by correspondence. All other forms of contact were subject to restrictions. In addition, he received only one visit from his relatives every six months, limited to four hours and two adult visitors. He was separated from his visitors by a wall preventing any physical contact and a guard was within hearing range at all times. Accordingly, the Court finds that Mr Izmestyev's right to respect for his private and family life was violated by the restrictions placed on his ability to receive family visits within the penal colony from 6 November 2011 to 25 November 2013.

### Video surveillance of the cell

The Court finds that the national law invoked as the legal basis for the interference with Mr Izmestyev's right to respect for private life (in particular, Article 83 of CESP2) lacks clarity. In particular, it does not make it possible to determine whether the domestic authorities' margin of appreciation as regards the right to privacy of Mr. Izmestyev was not respected. to the procedures for triggering and monitoring the implementation of video-surveillance is limited to what is "necessary in a democratic society". The Court also takes into account the interpretation of domestic law by the Russian supreme courts. It notes that the Court the constitutional court considered the placing of a convicted person under video surveillance to be a consequence of a person being sentenced to a term of imprisonment, and that this The measure was part of the restrictions that a person should expect if he or she were to commit a criminal offence. The Supreme Court has indicated that the placement of a prisoner under video surveillance was not conditional on the prior adoption of any decision, and that only the notification of this measure to the prisoner concerned was necessary. The Court considers that the case of Mr Izmestyev is an example of this. The Government did not demonstrated that the provisions of domestic law required that the placing of Mr Izmestyev under video surveillance be carried out on the basis of a decision accompanied by an explicit statement of reasons, i.e. analysing the factual reasons justifying that decision in the light of the aim pursued, whether the measure was limited in time or whether the prison authorities were under an obligation to do so review the merits on a regular basis. Russian law is therefore not sufficiently accessible and predictable because it does not indicate with sufficient clarity the extent and manner in which the power is to be exercised; and assessment of the internal authorities in the field of video surveillance of detainee's convicts serving a custodial sentence. Mr. Izmestyev did not therefore enjoy the degree minimum protection required by the rule of law in a democratic society.

## **Law – Article 6**

The Court noted that Mr Izmestyev had alleged that only four documents out of the hundreds included in the criminal case file were stamped "top secret", and that the Government did not dispute this.

However, the first-instance court had decided to hold the entire criminal trial in camera solely on account of the fact that classified documents had been included in the case file. The court had not given reasons for its decision so as to demonstrate that those documents were related to the subject matter of the proceedings and that their inclusion was essential. Equally, it had not examined those documents in judicial session and had not relied on them in the judgment convicting the applicant. Nor had it envisaged taking measures to limit the impact of the absence of a public hearing, for example by restricting access solely to the relevant documents and by holding only certain hearings in camera, although this option was provided for in the Code of Criminal Procedure. In consequence, the public's exclusion from Mr Izmestyev's trial before the first-instance court could not be considered justified. The Court reiterated that a higher court could, in certain cases, rectify a procedural shortcoming before the first-instance court, for example by carrying out a complete re-examination of the case, so that all the evidence was produced in the presence of the accused at a public hearing with a view to adversarial argument. However, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation had conducted no such re-examination in this case and had thus not made reparation for the lack of a public hearing during the criminal trial at first instance. There had therefore been a violation

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 8 and article 6

**Just satisfaction (Article 41):**

The Court held that Russia was to pay the applicant 10,000 euros (EUR) for non-pecuniary damage and EUR 2,000 for costs and expenses.

**123. *Eur. Court of HR, Strand Lobben and others v. Norway*, judgement of 10 September 2019, application no. 54646/17 and. 48818/17. The case concerned the removal of a mother's parental authority followed by a decision of adoption of her eldest son. The Grand Chamber concluded that the procedure in question had not been accompanied by safeguards that were commensurate with the gravity of the interference and the seriousness of the interests at stake.**

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***nos. 54646/17 and 48818/17***  
**10/09/2019**

Press release by the Registrar

**Strand Lobben and others v. Norway**

Removal of a mother's parental and a decision of adoption violated the right to privacy

**Basic Facts**

In September 2008 the first applicant, gave birth to a child X (the second applicant). The child-protection services had held that she was in need of guidance on how to care for X. She therefore agreed to stay with her son at a family centre during the first months of the child's life, so that her ability to give him proper care could be evaluated. Three weeks later she withdrew her consent. However, the child-protection services obtained, first, an emergency care order in October 2008, in application of which the child was entrusted to a foster family, then a permanent care order in March 2009. In December 2011 the Social Welfare Board issued an order removing the mother's parental authority and authorising the foster parents to adopt the child. This order was upheld by the City Court in February 2012. Although the first applicant's general situation had improved (she had married and had had a daughter, for whom she seemed able to care), it was held that she was not sufficiently capable of seeing or understanding

the special needs of the child, who was described as vulnerable by experts and who, if those needs were not met, was at significant risk of failing to develop normally. The child's fundamental attachment was with his foster parents, as he had lived with them almost since birth, and adoption would give him a sense of belonging and security for longer than a placement in a foster family.

In a judgment delivered on 30 November 2017, a Chamber of the Court concluded, by four votes to three, that there had been no violation of Article 8. In the Court's view, given that there had been no positive development in the first applicant's maternal competence in the contact situations throughout the three years in which she had had rights of access, that the decision-making process had been fair, and having regard to the fact that the domestic authorities had had the benefit of direct contact with all the persons concerned, the contested measures had been justified by exceptional circumstances and had been motivated by an overriding requirement pertaining to the child's best interests.

On 9 April 2018 the case was referred to the Grand Chamber at the applicants' request.

### **Law-Article 8**

Having regard to its temporal jurisdiction, the Court would focus its attention on the review carried out by the City Court in its judgment of February 2012. The City Court had been composed of a jurist, a psychologist and a layperson. It had held a three-day hearing that the first applicant attended together with her counsel and in which twenty-one witnesses, including experts, had given testimony. In addition, it had acted as an appeal instance and similar proceedings had previously been conducted by the County Social Welfare Board, which had a composition similar to that of the City Court and had given similarly extensive reasoning. Its judgment had been subject to review in leave-to-appeal proceedings before the High Court, which were in turn examined by the Supreme Court Appeals Board.

The imposition of the impugned measures depended mainly on the biological parent's capacity to care for the child. According to the City Court, it had to be regarded as probable that the first applicant would be permanently unable to provide X with proper care or that X had become so attached to his foster home and the environment there that, on the basis of an overall assessment, it appeared that removing him could entail serious problems for him. There was nothing in the case file to indicate that the first applicant's parenting abilities had improved since the appeal court's judgment of April 2010. The first applicant did not realise that she had neglected X and that she was unable to focus on X and what was best for him. The applicant had married and had had a second child, but the City Court had not considered this factor to be decisive in respect of her capacity to care for X. He was a particularly vulnerable child who had experienced serious and life-threatening neglect during the first three weeks of his life. The domestic court had also taken account of the way in which the mother-child contact sessions had proceeded. Furthermore, since X had lived in his foster family for three years and did not know the first applicant, it had concluded that returning X to her would require, among other things, a great capacity to empathise with and understand the child and the problems that he would experience, something that the first applicant and her family were incapable of providing.

The Court was fully conscious of the primordial interest of the child in the decision-making process. However, the domestic authorities had not attempted to perform a genuine balancing exercise between the interests of the child and his biological family, but had focused on the child's interests instead of seeking to combine both sets of interests. Moreover, they had not seriously contemplated any possibility of the child's reunification with his biological family. In that context, the Court, in particular, was not persuaded that the competent domestic authorities had duly considered the potential significance of the fact that at the time when the first applicant applied to have the care order lifted or, in the alternative, to be granted extended contact rights, she had married and had a second child. In this regard, as the City Court's decision had been largely premised on an assessment of the first applicant's lack of capacity to

provide care, the factual basis on which it relied in making that assessment appeared to disclose several shortcomings in the decision-making process.

The decisions under consideration had been taken in a context where there had only been very limited contact between the first applicant and X. The organisation of the contact arrangements had not been particularly conducive to enabling them to bond freely. Although the contact sessions had often not worked well, it appeared that almost nothing had been done to try out alternative contact arrangements. Those sparse contacts had thus provided limited evidence from which to draw clear conclusions about the first applicant's caring skills.

In addition, despite a request to that effect, no updated expert reports had been ordered. When the impugned judgment had been delivered, the two existing reports were two years old. Only one of the reports had been based on observations of the interplay between the applicants, and then only on two occasions. The lack of a fresh expert examination had substantially limited the factual assessment of the first applicant's new situation and her caring skills at the relevant time. In those circumstances, it could not reasonably be held against the first applicant that she had failed to appreciate that repeated legal proceedings could be harmful for the child in the long run.

In addition, the City Court had merely referred to the brief description of X's vulnerability given by the experts, namely that X was easily stressed and needed a lot of quiet, security and support, and stating his resistance to and resignation toward having contact with the first applicant, notably when faced with her emotional outbursts. It did not provide any information on how that vulnerability could have continued despite the fact that he had lived in foster care since the age of three weeks. Having regard to the seriousness of the interests at stake, it had nevertheless been incumbent on the competent authorities to assess X's vulnerability in more detail in the proceedings under review.

In those circumstances, taking particular account of the limited evidence that could be drawn from the mother-child sessions that had been organised, in conjunction with the failure, notwithstanding the first applicant's new family situation, to order a fresh expert examination into her capacity to provide proper care although this was a central factor in the City Court's assessment, and having regard also to the lack of reasoning with regard to X's continued vulnerability, the decision-making process which had led to the impugned decision of February 2012 had not been conducted in such a way as to ensure that all the views and interests of the applicants had duly been taken into account. Thus, the procedure in question had not been accompanied by safeguards that were commensurate with the gravity of the interference and the seriousness of the interests at stake.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 8 (thirteen votes to four).

124. *Eur. Court of HR, López Ribalda and Others v. Spain*, judgment of 17 October 2019, application nos. 1874/13 and 8567/13. The case concerned the decision of a private company to dismiss five employees after monitoring them with both visible and hidden surveillance cameras. The employees were not informed of the hidden cameras and had been caught on video helping co-workers and customers steal items and stealing them themselves. The Court concluded that the domestic courts had not exceeded their power of discretion (“margin of appreciation”) in finding the monitoring proportionate and legitimate.

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*nos. 1874/13 and 8567/13*  
17.10.2019

Press release issued by the Registrar

**LÓPEZ RIBALDA AND OTHERS v. SPAIN**

Spanish supermarket cashiers covertly filmed by security cameras  
did not suffer a violation of their privacy rights

**Basic Facts**

The applicants are five Spanish nationals who live in Spain. In June 2009 they were all working as cashiers for M.S.A., a family-owned supermarket chain. The surveillance was carried out by their employer in order to investigate possible theft after the shop manager had noticed irregularities between stock levels and what was actually sold on a daily basis. The employer installed both visible and hidden cameras but told to its workers about the visible cameras only. The employees did not know that there are also hidden cameras installed and they were thus never aware that they were being filmed. All the workers suspected of theft were called to individual meetings where the videos were shown to them. They had caught the applicants helping customers and other co-workers to steal items and stealing them themselves. The applicants admitted involvement in the thefts and were dismissed on disciplinary grounds.

Three of the five applicants signed a settlement agreement acknowledging their involvement in the thefts and committing themselves not to challenge their dismissal before the labour courts, while the employer company committed itself not to initiate criminal proceedings against them. All the applicants subsequently began Employment Tribunal proceedings for unfair dismissal, objecting in particular to the use of the covert video material as a breach of their privacy rights and arguing that such recordings could not be admitted in evidence. For the first two applicants, who did not sign settlement agreements, the Employment Tribunal examined the case in the light of principles set down by the Constitutional Court on the need for proportionality when using video-surveillance in the workplace. The Employment Tribunal found that there had been no breach of the applicants’ right to respect for their private life, that the recordings were valid evidence, and that their dismissal had been lawful. The Employment Tribunal dismissed the other three applicants’ cases, upholding the employer’s objection that the action was invalid because they had signed settlement agreements. The High Court upheld the first-instance judgments on appeal. The first applicant expressly relied on the need under domestic legislation for prior notification of surveillance, but the High Court held that such measures had rather to be subjected to a proportionality test under the Constitutional Court’s criteria. The supermarket’s surveillance had met the criteria because it had been justified owing to suspicions of misconduct, had been appropriate for the aim, and necessary.

**Law – Article 8**

Case-law principles

The Court held that the principles set out in *Barbelescu v. Romania*, about an employer’s monitoring of an employee’s email account, were transferable to a case of video-surveillance in the workplace. To

that end domestic courts had to consider whether employees had been informed of such surveillance measures; the extent of the monitoring and the degree of intrusion; whether legitimate reasons had been provided; the possibility for less intrusive measures; the consequences of the monitoring for the employees; and the provision of appropriate safeguards, such as appropriate information or the possibility of making a complaint. The Court noted that the applicants had argued that under Spanish law they should have been informed of the surveillance and that the domestic courts' findings had been wrong. It therefore examined how the courts had come to their conclusions.

#### Domestic courts' review

It first held that the courts had correctly identified the interests at stake, referring expressly to the applicants' right to respect for their private life and the balance to be struck between that right and the employer company's interest in protecting its property and the smooth running of its operations. The courts had gone on to examine the other criteria, such as whether there were legitimate reasons for the surveillance, finding it to be justified by the suspicion of theft. They had also looked at the extent of the measure, holding that it had been limited to the checkout area and had not exceeded what was necessary, a conclusion the Court did not find unreasonable. Noting in addition that the applicants had worked in an area open to the public, the Court distinguished between the levels of privacy an employee could expect depending on location: it was very high in private places such as toilets or cloakrooms, where a complete ban on video-surveillance could be justified, and was high in confined workspaces such as offices. However, it was clearly lower in places that were visible or accessible to colleagues or the general public. Given the surveillance had only lasted 10 days and that a restricted number of people had viewed the recordings, the Court took the view that the intrusion into the applicants' privacy had not attained a high degree of seriousness. Furthermore, while the consequences for the applicants had been serious as they had lost their jobs, the courts had observed that the videos had not been used for any purpose other than to trace those responsible for the losses and that there was no other measure that could have met the legitimate aim pursued. Spanish law also had safeguards to prevent the improper use of personal data in the shape of the Personal Data Protection Act, while the Constitutional Court required that the ordinary courts carry out reviews of video-surveillance measures for their conformity with the Constitution.

#### Prior notification of video-surveillance measures

On the specific point that the applicants had not been informed of the monitoring, the Court noted a widespread international consensus that such information should be provided, even if only in a general manner. If it was lacking, the safeguards from the other criteria for the protection of privacy were all the more important.

The Court held that while only an overriding requirement relating to the protection of significant public or private interests could justify the lack of prior notification, the domestic courts' had not exceeded the limits of their discretion ("margin of appreciation") in finding that the interference with the applicants' rights had been proportionate. While the Court could not accept that simply a slight suspicion of wrongdoing by an employee could justify the installation of covert video-surveillance by an employer, it found that the reasonable suspicion of serious misconduct and the extent of the losses in this case could be a weighty justification. This was all the more so when there was a suspicion of concerted action. Furthermore, the applicants had had other legal remedies available such as a complaint to the Data Protection Authority or an action in court for an alleged breach of their rights under the Personal Data Protection Act, however, they had not used them. Given the domestic legal safeguards, including the remedies which the applicants had failed to use, and the considerations justifying the video-surveillance as assessed by the domestic courts, the Court held that the authorities had not overstepped their margin of appreciation and there had been no violation of Article 8.

## Law – Article 6 § 1

The Court examined whether the use of the video-recordings in evidence had undermined the fairness of the proceedings as a whole. It considered in particular that the applicants had been able to contest the use of the recordings and that the courts had given extensive reasoning in their decisions. The video material had not been the only evidence in the case file, the applicants had not questioned its authenticity or accuracy and the Court took the view that it was sound evidence which did not need further corroboration. The courts had taken other evidence into consideration, such as the parties' testimony. The Court thus held that the use of the video material as evidence had not undermined the fairness of the trial. The Court also noted that the third, fourth and fifth applicants had been able to challenge the settlement agreements and their use in evidence. The domestic courts' findings that no duress or intimidation had been used did not appear to be either arbitrary or manifestly unreasonable. The Court saw no reason to call into question the domestic courts' findings on the validity and weight of the settlement agreements and found no violation of Article 6 on this point either.

**Conclusion:** No violation of Article 8.

**125. Eur. Court of HR, *Hambardzumyan v. Arménia*, judgment of 5 December 2019, application no. 43478/11. The case concerned the applicant's complaint that the police had not had a valid court warrant to place her under secret surveillance during a criminal investigation. The Court concluded that the warrant had not listed the specific measures that were to be carried out against the applicant. Overall, the surveillance measure had not had sufficient judicial supervision and had been in conflict with the Convention.**

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**No. 43478/11**  
**05.12.2019**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **HAMBARDZUMYAN v. ARMENIA**

Court warrant on secret surveillance was too vague  
and lacked an indication of specific covert measures.

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Karine Hambardzumyan, is an Armenian national who was born in 1956 and lived in Yerevan prior to her detention. She was serving a sentence of imprisonment in Abovyan correctional facility when her application was lodged.

While the applicant was working as the deputy head of the women's unit of Abovyan correctional facility, one of the prisoners reported to the head of the Department Against Organised Crime of the Armenian Police that the applicant had demanded a bribe in return for a transfer to an open prison.

The authorities sought and obtained a court order to carry out secret surveillance. They provided the prisoner with recording equipment to be used during a meeting with the applicant, intercepted their telephone conversations and made a video-recording of the handover of the bribe money, which was given in marked banknotes.

When the investigation was completed in May 2010, the applicant was given access to the case file which was when she became aware of the secret surveillance.

During her trial, she argued unsuccessfully that the covert surveillance material should be excluded as the court warrant had not been valid: it had been vague as it had not named her as the person to be subjected to surveillance. The trial court convicted the applicant of taking bribes and of fraud and sentenced her to nine years' imprisonment, upheld on appeal in March 2011.

### **Law – Article 8**

The Court rejected objections by the Government that the application was inadmissible for failure to exhaust domestic remedies or because it had been lodged outside the six-month time-limit. The Court was not convinced that the remedy suggested by the Government, of appealing against the court order to authorise the secret surveillance after she had become aware of it, was an available and sufficient remedy that could have afforded the applicant redress in respect of the alleged breach of Article 8. It had therefore not been unreasonable for the applicant to have tried to address that breach during the court proceedings in her case. Notably, the domestic courts had in fact examined her Convention complaints, which primarily concerned the lawfulness of surveillance measures. As she had subsequently lodged her application with the Court within six months of the end of those proceedings, she had met the Convention time-limit. On the merits of the case, the Court noted that the applicant's complaint focussed on the fact that the court warrant authorising the secret surveillance had not complied with domestic legislation. She had stated that the warrant had not given her name as the target of the audio and video-recording which the police had been permitted to carry out, while the Government had countered that the intended target had been clear from the reasoning of the warrant. The Court noted, however, that the court's reasoning had reproduced the police's wording in the application for the warrant, which had stated that the prisoner's actions had contained elements of the crime of taking bribes. That had left room for speculation as to whether it was the prisoner or the applicant or any other person who was the target of the surveillance, vagueness which was unacceptable in a judicial authorisation for such a serious interference with respect for private life as secret surveillance. Furthermore, domestic law had an exhaustive list of the types of operative and intelligence measures and required that court warrants had to indicate the specific activities that they authorised. However, the list did not include an activity called "audio and video-recordings". In the applicant's case it appeared that the police had carried out two distinct types of operative and intelligence measure, external surveillance and the interception of telephone communications, although the warrant had not specified those measures. 3 The Court concluded that the surveillance measure used against the applicant had not had proper judicial supervision and had not been "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of Article 8 § 2 of the Convention. There had therefore been a violation of that provision. Article 6 The applicant argued that she had not a fair trial because unlawfully obtained surveillance material had been admitted in evidence against her and accepted by the courts. The Government argued that the applicant had been able to challenge the use of the recordings in court and that they had not been the only evidence against her. The Court found that the applicant had had an effective possibility to challenge the authenticity of the material and oppose its use. The trial court had dealt with that challenge only in vague terms but the court of appeal had examined her arguments on the merits and had provided reasons for its decision to uphold the trial court's findings on that question. The recordings had not been the only evidence used to convict her as the trial court had relied on the prisoner's statements, other witness statements as well as material and forensic evidence. The Court thus found that the use of the secretly taped material had not conflicted with the requirements of fairness guaranteed by Article 6 § 1 and there had been no violation of that Article.

### **Law – Article 6**

The applicant argued that she had not a fair trial because unlawfully obtained surveillance material had been admitted in evidence against her and accepted by the courts. The Government argued that the applicant had been able to challenge the use of the recordings in court and that they had not been the only evidence against her. The Court found that the applicant had had an effective possibility to

challenge the authenticity of the material and oppose its use. The trial court had dealt with that challenge only in vague terms but the court of appeal had examined her arguments on the merits and had provided reasons for its decision to uphold the trial court's findings on that question. The recordings had not been the only evidence used to convict her as the trial court had relied on the prisoner's statements, other witness statements as well as material and forensic evidence. The Court thus found that the use of the secretly taped material had not conflicted with the requirements of fairness guaranteed by Article 6 § 1 and there had been no violation of that Article.

**Conclusion:** No violation of article 8 and article 6.

**Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held that Armenia was to pay the applicant 1,200 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**126. Eur. Court of Hr, Beizaras and Levickas v. Lithuania, judgement of 14 January 2020, application no. 41288/15. The case concerned two young men in a relationship which posted a photograph of the couple kissing on Facebook, thing that led to hundreds of online hate comments and threads. Both the prosecuting authorities and the courts refused to launch a pre-trial investigation for incitement to hatred and violence against homosexuals. The Court concluded that that there had been a violation of Article 14, taken in conjunction with Article 8 of the Convention and violation of the Article 13.**

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**No. 41288/15  
14/01/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**Beizaras and Levickas v. Lithuania**

The refuse to launch a pre-trial investigation for incitement to hatred and violence against homosexuals did violate the right to privacy

**Basic facts**

The applicants are, two Lithuanian nationals, in a same-sex relationship. In December one of applicants posted a photograph of them kissing on his Facebook page.

The photograph went "viral", receiving hundreds of comments in Lithuania which mostly included calls for the applicants to be "castrated", "killed", "exterminated" and "burned" because of their homosexuality. The applicants decided to complain to the prosecuting authorities and to request that they initiate criminal proceedings for incitement to hatred and violence against homosexuals.

The prosecutor decided, however, not to initiate a pre-trial investigation regarding the complaint. He considered that the authors of the comments had merely been "expressing their opinion" and that they had reacted "unethically", their behaviour did not warrant prosecution. The prosecutor further pointed out that his conclusion was in line with the Supreme Court's practice in such cases.

The domestic courts then fully endorsed the prosecutor's stance in a final ruling of February 2015, adding that the applicants' behaviour had been "eccentric" and deliberately provocative. In particular, the applicants could have foreseen that posting a picture of two men kissing would not contribute to social cohesion and the promotion of tolerance in Lithuania, a country where "traditional family values

were very much appreciated". It would have been preferable for the applicants to share their picture with "like-minded people", especially since Facebook gave the possibility to restrict access to just friends.

### **Law-Article 14 taken in conjunction with Article 8**

The Court found it clear that the comments on applicants Facebook page had affected their psychological well-being and dignity, bringing the case within the scope of Article 8 and therefore Article 14.

The Government had acknowledged in their submissions that the comments had been "offensive and vulgar". However, it denied that the applicants had been discriminated against, arguing that the domestic authorities' decisions not to start a criminal investigation had had nothing to do with their sexual orientation. It argued in particular that the decisions had been based: firstly on the applicants' behaviour, which had been provocative, among other things because of a cross woven into the second applicant's jumper, which could have sparked conflict with people of a different cultural and religious background; and secondly, on the fact that the comments in question had not reached a level so as to be considered criminal.

The Court considered the applicants with a "eccentric behaviour", and they had expressly referred to their sexual orientation in their decisions. They had even quite clearly expressed disapproval of the applicants so publicly demonstrating their sexual orientation when refusing to launch a pre-trial investigation, citing the incompatibility of "traditional family values" with social acceptance of homosexuality. Because of the authorities' discriminatory attitude, the applicants had not been protected, as was their right under criminal law, from what could only be described as undisguised calls for an attack on their physical and mental integrity.

The Court thus found that the hate comments had been inspired by a bigoted attitude towards the homosexual community in general and that the same discriminatory state of mind had been at the core of the authorities' failure to comply with their duty to investigate in an effective manner whether those comments had constituted incitement to hatred and violence. By downgrading the danger of such comments, the authorities had at the very least tolerated them.

The Court therefore found that the applicants had suffered discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation. It further considered that the Government had not provided any justification showing that the difference in treatment had been compatible with the standards of the Convention.

### **Article 13 (right to an effective remedy)**

The Court found that the Lithuanian Supreme Court's case law as applied by the prosecutor, whose decision had then been upheld by the domestic courts, had not provided for an effective domestic remedy for homophobic discrimination complaints. In particular, the Court noted with concern that the Supreme Court's case-law emphasised the "eccentric behaviour" of persons belonging to sexual minorities and their duty "to respect the views and traditions of others" when exercising their own rights. Furthermore, although that court had previously examined homophobic speech, it had never been as serious as in the applicants' case and the court had thus not had the opportunity to clarify the standards to be applied.

That finding was borne out by statistics which showed that of the 30 pre-trial investigations regarding homophobic hate speech opened in Lithuania between 2012 and 2015, all had been discontinued. Indeed, the domestic court which had handed down the final ruling in the applicants' case had even pointed out that opening criminal proceedings would have been a "waste of time and resources".

Moreover, reports by international bodies, including the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), confirmed that there was growing intolerance towards sexual minorities in Lithuania and that the authorities lacked a comprehensive strategic approach to tackle racist and homophobic hate speech.

The Court therefore found that there had also been a violation of Article 13 of the Convention because the applicants had been denied an effective domestic remedy for their complaints about a breach of their private life owing to discrimination on account of their sexual orientation.

**Conclusion:** violation of Article 14 in conjunction with Article 8 and violation of Article 13.

**127. Eur. Court of HR, Breyer v. Germany, judgment of 30 January 2020, application no. 50001/12.** The case concerned the storage of pre-paid SIM card users' data by telecommunications companies. The court concluded that Germany had not overstepped the limits of its discretion ("margin of appreciation") in applying the law concerned and there had been no violation of the applicants' rights by the collection of the data

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**No. 50001/12**  
**30.01.2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**BREYER v. GERMANY**

Requirement to collect data to identify users of pre-paid SIM cards  
did not violate the right to privacy

**Basic Facts**

The applicants, Patrick Breyer and Jonas Breyer, are German nationals who were born in 1977 and 1982 respectively and live in Wald-Michelbach (Germany). In accordance with 2004 amendments to the Telecommunications Act companies had to collect and store the personal details of all their customers, including users of pre-paid SIM cards, which had not previously been required. The applicants, civil liberties activists and critics of State surveillance, were users of such cards and therefore had to register their personal details, such as their telephone numbers, date of birth, and their name and address, with their service providers. In 2005 they lodged a constitutional complaint against various sections of the Act, including sections 111, 112 and 113. These provisions, as far as relevant in the present case, covered respectively the obligation to collect the data and for the authorities to access it, both automatically and on demand. On 24 January 2012 the Federal Constitutional Court found that the provisions in question were compatible with the Basic Law as being proportionate and justified.

**Law – Article 8**

The Court considered that the interference complained of was related to the storage of their personal subscriber data (telephone number, name and address, date of birth and date of contract) and the possibility for national authorities to access that data in certain defined circumstances and therefore examined the applicants' complaints under Article 8 alone. It reiterated its case-law that protecting such data was of fundamental importance to allow people to enjoy their right to respect for private and family life, necessitating sufficient legal safeguards to prevent the use of data in a way which went against the guarantees of Article 8. Governments had some leeway ("margin of appreciation") when pursuing the legitimate aim of protecting national security. Where there was no consensus within Council of Europe States on a particular interest or how best to protect it, then the margin of appreciation would be greater.

### Existence and nature of interference

The applicants argued that the measure in question was a serious interference with their rights. Companies had to collect the data on all users, most of whom were innocent of any offence. The Government conceded that section 111 had interfered with the applicants' right to privacy. However, the interference had been limited, had pursued legitimate aims, had limited the data to what was necessary for identification, had had a clearly defined and limited storage period, and had had sufficient safeguards against abuse. The Court accepted that there had been an interference with the applicants' rights and examined whether it had been in line with Convention requirements of being in accordance with the law, pursuing a legitimate aim, and necessary in a democratic society.

### Meeting Convention requirements for interference

On the first point, it found that the legal provisions were clear and foreseeable. Furthermore, the interference had pursued the legitimate aims of public safety, the prevention of disorder or crime and the protection of others' rights. As to necessity, it first accepted that investigative tools had to adapt to modern means of communication when it came to fighting challenges such as organised crime and terrorism. Given the certain margin of appreciation for Member States in such circumstances, it found that the obligation to store the data was in general a suitable response to changes in communications behaviour and in the means of telecommunications. The Court then dealt with the question of whether the interference had been proportionate and had struck a fair balance between the competing public and private interests at stake. The Court first addressed the level of interference with the applicants' right to private life. It agreed with findings by the Federal Constitutional Court that only a limited set of data had been stored as it did not include highly personal information and communications traffic and that the level of interference in this case had to be clearly distinguished from the Court's previous cases. It also had regard to the case-law of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) on which the applicants had relied (*Digital Rights Ireland and Seitlinger and Others*) and found that the data at issue in the present case bore greater resemblance to that at issue in *Ministerio Fiscal*, which had concerned police requests to access data, such as names and addresses, to identify the owners of SIM cards activated with stolen mobile telephones, where the CJEU had concluded that the access to the data could not be defined as a serious interference with the fundamental rights of the persons concerned. The Court concluded that the interference in the present case was of a rather limited nature, albeit not trivial. It furthermore found the storage period to be not inappropriate, while the information held appeared to be limited to that necessary to identify subscribers.

### Access to the data

The Court assessed the proportionality of the interference by the provisions on access to the data. The Government argued that sections 112 and 113 in conjunction with other specific provisions for data retrieval limited access to and use of the data and constituted effective safeguards against abuse. The applicants held that the possibilities of subsequent use of their personal data by the authorities had to be taken into account. The Court observed that the automated procedure under section 112 had very much simplified data retrieval but held that the fact that the authorities which could request access were specifically listed in section 112 and were all concerned with law enforcement or the protection of national security constituted a limiting factor. Furthermore, section 113, on the procedure for written requests for data, did not provide the precise names of bodies but gave their functions, which the Court considered was clear enough to foresee which bodies could ask for information. Both provisions provided further additional safeguards against abusive demands. The Court lastly considered the available possibilities of review and supervision of information requests under both sections and concluded that they also provided for independent supervision by Federal and Land data protection authorities. In addition, the Federal Constitutional Court had ruled that legal redress against information retrieval could be sought under general rules.

## Conclusions

Overall, Germany had not overstepped the certain margin of appreciation it had when choosing the means to achieve the legitimate aims of protecting national security and fighting crime. The Court concluded that the storage of the applicants' personal data had been proportionate and "necessary in a democratic society". There had thus been no violation of the Convention

**Conclusion:** No violation of article 8.

**128. Eur. Court of HR Buturuga v. Romania, judgment of 11 February 2020, application no. 56867/15. The case concerned allegations of domestic violence and of violation of the confidentiality of electronic correspondence by the former husband of the applicant, who complained of shortcomings in the system for protecting victims of this type of violence. The Court found that the national authorities had not addressed the criminal investigation as raising the specific issue of domestic violence, and that they had thereby failed to provide an appropriate response to the seriousness of the facts complained applicant.**

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**No: 56867/15  
11/02/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **Buturuga v. Romania**

#### **Basic facts**

The applicant, a Romanian national, starting from the end of 2013, lodged three complaints against her husband, alleging that she had been the victim of domestic violence as he had threatened to kill her, and presented a medical certificate describing her injuries. At the end of January 2014, the couple divorced. In March 2014 the applicant requested an electronic search of the family computer, alleging that her former husband had wrongfully consulted her electronic accounts – including her Facebook account– and had copied her private conversations, documents and photographs. Then in September 2014 she lodged a third complaint of breach of the confidentiality of her correspondence.

In February 2015 the prosecutor's office discontinued the case on the grounds that although applicants' former husband had threatened to kill her, his behaviour had not been sufficiently serious to be designated as a criminal offence. It also decided to dismiss, as out of time, applicants' complaint concerning the violation of the confidentiality of her correspondence. The applicant appealed this decision which was unfortunately confirmed.

#### **Law- Article 3 combined with article 8**

The Court checked whether rules and practices had been defective and noted these points: First of all, the authorities had not addressed the facts from the domestic violence angle. Their decisions had been based on the criminal code provisions penalising violence between private individuals, and not on those laying down harsher penalties for domestic violence. Secondly, the Court pointed out that the specific features of domestic violence as recognised in the Istanbul Convention had to be taken into account in the framework of domestic proceedings. In the present case, however, the investigation had taken no account of those features. Thirdly, the conclusions reached by the court of first instance were questionable. The court had found that the threats to the applicant had not been sufficiently serious to qualify as offences, and that there was no direct evidence that the injuries had been caused by her

former husband. Yet the investigation had failed to identify the individual responsible for the injuries, whose reality and severity had not been contested. Fourthly, in view of the fact that the protection order had been issued for a period subsequent to the impugned incidents, its effects had had no impact on the effectiveness of the criminal investigation.

As regards the investigation into the breach of confidentiality of the applicant's correspondence, the Court observed that the Romanian Penal Code explicitly penalised the offence of violating the confidentiality of correspondence of which the applicant had complained during the criminal proceedings. In that regard, the Court pointed out in particular that cyberbullying was currently a recognised aspect of violence against women and girls, and could take on a variety of forms, including cyber breaches of privacy, intrusion into the victim's computer and the capture, sharing and manipulation of data and images, including private data. In the context of domestic violence, cybersurveillance was often carried out by the person's partner.

Consequently, the Court accepted applicants' argument that acts such as illicitly monitoring, accessing or saving one's partner's correspondence could be taken into account by the domestic authorities when investigating cases of domestic violence.

In the present case, however, the domestic authorities had failed to consider the merits of the applicant criminal complaint of violation of the confidentiality of her correspondence. Her request for an electronic search of the family computer had been dismissed on the grounds that any facts liable to be ascertained by this means would have no relation to the former husband's alleged threats and violence. Her criminal complaint of violation of the confidentiality of her correspondence had been dismissed as out of time. The Court took the view that the investigating authorities had been overly formalistic in adopting that stance, particularly since under the new Penal Code then investigating authorities could intervene automatically in the event of the wrongful interception of a conversation conducted by any electronic means of communication, whereby the condition of a prior complaint had to be fulfilled solely for the improper opening, removal, destruction or detention of correspondence addressed to someone else. Furthermore, the court of first instance had ruled that applicants' complaint concerning the alleged violation of the confidentiality of her correspondence had been unrelated to the subject matter of the case, and that data published on the social networks were public. Such allegations required the authorities to conduct an examination on the merits in order comprehensively to apprehend the phenomenon of domestic violence in all its forms. Indeed, the applicant had alleged that her former husband had wrongfully consulted her electronic accounts, including her Facebook account, and that he had made copies of her private conversations, documents and photographs.

The Court deduced that the applicant had been referring to a whole set of electronic data and documents which had not been confined to the data which she had published on the social networks. Consequently, the finding by the court of first instance that the data in issue had been public was problematic to the extent that the domestic authorities had not conducted an examination on the merits of the applicant's allegations in order to determine the nature of the data and communications in question.

Consequently, the Court concluded that the applicant's allegations to the effect that her former husband had improperly intercepted, consulted and saved her electronic communications had not been examined on the merits by the national authorities. They had not adopted procedural measures to gather evidence to establish the veracity of the facts or their legal classification. The authorities had therefore been overly formalistic in dismissing any connection with the domestic violence which the applicant had already reported and had thus failed to take into consideration the many forms taken on by domestic violence.

Conclusion: violation of the Article 3 and 8.

**129. Eur. Court of HR, Gaughran v. United Kingdom, judgment of 13 February 2020, application no. 45245/15.** The case concerned a complaint about the indefinite retention of personal data (DNA profile, fingerprints and photograph) of a man who had a spent conviction for driving with excess alcohol in Northern Ireland. , the Court considered that the retention of the applicant’s data had failed to strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests.

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**No. 45245/15**  
**13.02.2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **GAUGHRAN v. UNITED KINGDOM**

Indefinite retention of DNA, fingerprints and photograph of man convicted of drink driving breached his privacy rights

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Fergus Gaughran, is a British national who was born in 1972 and lives in Newry (Northern Ireland, United Kingdom). Mr Gaughran was arrested in October 2008 for driving with excess alcohol (an offence punishable by imprisonment, known as a “recordable offence”). He was taken to the police station where he provided a breath sample, which came up positive. The police also took his photograph, fingerprints and a DNA sample. He later pleaded guilty, was given a fine and banned from driving for 12 months. His conviction was spent in 2013. His DNA sample was destroyed in 2015 at his request. The Police Service of Northern Ireland (“the PSNI”) continues to retain on an indefinite basis the DNA profile (digital data) extracted from his DNA sample, his fingerprints and photograph. He unsuccessfully challenged the PSNI’s continued retention of his data in the domestic courts.

#### **Law – Article 8**

The Court found that the retention of the applicant’s DNA profile, fingerprints and photograph amounted to an interference with his private life which had pursued the legitimate purpose of the detection, and therefore, prevention of crime. It emphasised the importance of examining privacy rights where the powers vested in the State were obscure and where the technology available was continually becoming more sophisticated. For example, the technology regarding photographs and facial mapping had already moved on since the case had been examined by the domestic courts. It went on to examine whether the interference in the applicant’s privacy rights had been justified, reiterating that the national authorities had to be given leeway (“margin of appreciation”) when making that assessment. A strong consensus in the member States’ approach to retaining data of those convicted of an offence would narrow that margin of appreciation. The Court considered that the majority of member States had regimes which put a time-limit on retaining the biometric data, that is, fingerprints and DNA profiles, of convicted persons. The UK was one of the few Council of Europe jurisdictions to permit indefinite retention of DNA profile. The margin of appreciation, in particular in respect of DNA profiles, had therefore been narrowed. The Court underlined though that the duration of the retention was not conclusive in assessing whether a State had overstepped the acceptable margin of appreciation in establishing its retention regime. There was not the same risk of stigmatisation in retaining the data as in *S. and Marper v. the UK*, which had concerned individuals suspected of offences but not convicted. What was decisive was the existence and functioning of safeguards. Having chosen to allocate itself the most extensive power of indefinite retention, the State had put itself at the limit of the margin of appreciation. So, it had to ensure that certain safeguards were present and effective for the applicant. However, the applicant’s biometric data and photographs had been retained without reference to the seriousness of his offence and without regard to any continuing need to retain that data indefinitely. Moreover, the police in Northern Ireland

were only empowered to delete biometric data and photographs in exceptional circumstances. Therefore the applicant could not request a review of the retention of his data, as there was no provision permitting deletion if conserving the data no longer appeared necessary in view of the nature of his offence, his age, or the time that had elapsed and his current personality. 2 Four out of 31 Council of Europe member States surveyed (Cyprus, Ireland, North Macedonia and Montenegro) have indefinite retention periods of DNA profiles following a conviction for a minor criminal offence. See paragraph 53 of the judgment. 3 The Court found that the nature of those powers failed to strike a fair balance between the competing public and private interests. The respondent State had therefore overstepped the acceptable margin of appreciation and the retention at issue constituted a disproportionate interference with the applicant's right to respect for private life, which could not be regarded as necessary in a democratic society.

**Conclusion:** Violation of article 8

### **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held that the finding of a violation was in itself sufficient just satisfaction for any non-pecuniary damage sustained.

**130. Eur. Court of HR, Trajkovski and Chipovski v. North Macedonia, judgment of 13 February 2020, application nos. 53205/13 and 63320/13. The case concerned the retention of DNA data of convicted persons. The indefinite retention is a disproportionate interference with the applicants' right to privacy.**

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**Nos. 53205/13 and 63320/13**  
**13.02.2020**

## **TRAJKOVSKI AND CHIPOVSKI v. NORTH MACEDONIA**

Indefinite retention of DNA data of convicted person breached his privacy rights

### **Basic Facts**

The applicants, Jovche Trajkovski and Dimitar Chipovski, are two Macedonians/citizens of North Macedonia. The applicants had DNA samples taken from them in the context of criminal proceedings brought against them in 2009 and 2010. They were subsequently convicted of aggravated theft and given suspended sentences. Mr Trajkovski's conviction was based on his DNA profile, while in Mr Chipovski's case his DNA make-up was not used as evidence against him. They both filed complaints with the Personal Data Protection Directorate, arguing that the police had violated their privacy rights by taking and retaining their DNA. The Directorate dismissed their complaints, finding that the police were authorised by domestic law to collect, process and store an individual's personal data when there was a reasonable suspicion that he or she had committed a crime. The applicants challenged these decisions before the administrative courts, but their complaints were dismissed on similar grounds in 2013. Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), the applicants alleged that there was no legislative framework clearly regulating the taking, use, processing, storing and deletion of DNA material in North Macedonia. They complained in particular that the purposes for which DNA samples can be taken and profiles stored are couched in too broad terms and that the relevant provisions under national law did not specify how long DNA material could be retained in respect of convicted persons such as themselves.

## Law – Article 8

The Court found that DNA material is personal data and that there is a basis in domestic law for the taking and storing of DNA material for the purpose of establishing the identity of a person suspected of a crime without her consent. However, The Court observes that the regulatory framework for the retention of such data is not sufficiently precise. However, she notes that the regulatory framework for the retention of such data is not precise enough. Indeed, it was only specified that these data may be “retained until it has fulfilled the purpose for which it has been taken” so the duration is open to various interpretations. The Court considers that the respondent State permits indefinite retention period of DNA profiles

While the conviction of the first applicant was based on the results of the DNA tests, the DNA material taken from the second applicant was not indispensable to secure his conviction, as this material was not used as evidence against him. The sample was therefore taken in a general way.

In conclusion, the Court finds that there is no fair balance between public and private interests because of the general and indiscriminate nature of the powers of retention of the DNA profiles of applicants, as persons convicted of an offence, and the absence of sufficient safeguards. The respondent State exceeded the margin of appreciation acceptable in this respect. Consequently, this is a disproportionate interference with the applicants' right to privacy and cannot be considered necessary in a democratic society.

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 8

### Just satisfaction (Article 41)

The Court held that the finding of a violation constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction for the non-pecuniary damage sustained by the applicants.

**131. *Eur. Court of HR, Hudorovic and others v. Slovenia, judgement of 10 March 2020, application nos. 24816/14 and 25140/14.* The case concerned complaints by the applicants, who are all Slovenian nationals of Roma origin, about an alleged lack of access to drinking water and sanitation, taking into consideration their lifestyle and minority status. The Court found that the authorities had taken positive steps to provide them with adequate access to safe drinking water therefore there had been no violation of Article 8.**

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**Nos.24816/14 and 25140/14  
10/03/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **Hudorovič and Others v. Slovenia**

#### **Basic facts**

The applicants live in the informal Roma settlement of Škocjan Municipality, which consists mainly of wooden huts with no plumbing or sewerage. In 1999 one of the applicants agreed that a diesel generator and a water tank of 2,000-3,000 litres were to be purchased and placed in the settlement. Water was to be provided by the fire brigade and the residents were also to pay for adequate sanitation and arrange for a clean-up of the surrounding area. The water tank was eventually purchased and put in place, but

the parties disagreed as to further developments. The Government submitted that the fire brigade had delivered water at the residents' request and that it was poured into a large tank and other containers when the tank was full. The diesel generator and the water tank had been subsequently sold. The applicants stated that the tank had become mouldy and unusable and that residents had had to replace it.

In 2011 the authorities provided a group water connection on municipal land next to the settlement which by 2015 was supplying seven homes. The applicants have not taken part in that system, stating that this was partly due to opposition from a neighbour to their accessing it. They obtain water from a fountain in the village.

### **Law-Article 8 and 14**

The Court noted that access to safe drinking water was not, as such, protected by Article 8, however, water was necessary for human survival and a persistent and long-standing lack of access to it could have adverse consequences for health and human dignity effectively eroding the core of private life and the enjoyment of a home. The Court was therefore unable to exclude that a convincing allegation of such stringent conditions could trigger the State's positive obligations under Article 8. The Court noted the steps taken in general by the authorities to ameliorate the precarious living conditions of Roma communities in Slovenia. The applicants were also in receipt of social welfare benefits and were not living in a state of extreme poverty. The Court thus considered that the authorities had recognised the applicants' situation and, through their system of social benefits, had ensured that they were guaranteed a certain basic level of subsistence which was, or could have been, used, among other things, for improving their living conditions. Furthermore, the municipal authorities had taken some concrete steps to ensure the applicants had access to safe drinking water. The Court accepted that one or several water tanks had been installed in the first applicants' settlement between 1999 and 2016, which had been supplied with water upon request. While such measures could be considered interim rather than permanent solutions, the Court found that those positive measures had provided the applicants with the possibility to access safe drinking water.

In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it found that the authorities had taken the measures in good faith. Nor had the applicants shown that the municipal authorities had de-prioritised their interests in the regulation of their settlements and access to safe drinking water in favour of other, less urgent measures aimed at improving the infrastructure of the majority, population. Indeed, access in general to safe drinking water from the public water distribution system in both municipalities and other remote parts of Slovenia was limited. The Court noted that the measures taken by the municipalities had not included any steps to ensure sanitation. However, a lack of public sewerage systems was a feature of many parts of Slovenia and access to sanitation in both municipalities in question was limited. In addition, given the gradual nature of developing public infrastructure and the State's wide discretion in the prioritisation of resources for urban planning, the Court considered that only particularly convincing reasons, such as a serious risk to health, could justify imposing a burden on the State to take any steps with regard to the applicants' respective situations. The applicants had not convincingly demonstrated that the State's alleged failure to provide them with access to safe drinking water had resulted in adverse consequences for health and human dignity effectively eroding their core rights under Article 8. It thus found that the measures adopted by the State in order to ensure their access to safe drinking water and sanitation had taken account of their vulnerable position and had satisfied the requirements of Article 8 of the Convention. The Court furthermore held, by five votes to two, that there was no need to decide on the applicability of Article 14. It also considered that even if Article 14 applied, there had been no violation of that provision in conjunction with Article 8.

### Article 3

The Court had established that the positive measures taken by the domestic authorities had provided the applicants with the opportunity to access safe drinking water. For that reason, even if the alleged suffering had reached the minimum threshold and that Article 3 was applicable, there had been no violation of that provision, taken alone and with Article 14.

**Conclusion:** No violation of Article 8

**132. Eur. Court of HR, Marina v. Romania, judgment of 26 may 2020, application no.50469/14.**  
The case concerned a radio programme during which a letter was read out containing personal information about Mr Marina and his ex-wife, without their knowledge and on the initiative of the applicant's sister.

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**No. 50469/14**  
**26.05.2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

#### **MARINA v. ROMANIA**

A radio show's broadcast of purported information on the private and family life of a police officer was not a matter of public interest

#### **Basic Facts**

At the relevant time, the applicant, Viorel Marina, was a superintendent in the Prahova police force. In June 2011 two radio presenters read out, during a live broadcast, a letter sent to the station by Mr Marina's sister. On the same day he and his ex-wife went to the head office of the radio station and complained about a breach of their right to respect for their private life, stating that defamatory allegations had been made against them without their consent or any verification. After concluding that the sender had not told the truth, the radio broadcast a retraction over a period of four days. It also invited Mr Marina to exercise his right of reply, but he declined. In August 2011 Mr Marina's ex-wife sued the radio station, seeking compensation for the damage to her reputation. She won her case and the radio station was ordered to pay her damages.

In August 2012 Mr Marina also sued the radio station in tort. The following year the court ordered the broadcaster to pay 4,500 euros in damages, finding that the programme had caused damage to his image and private life, particularly in view of the fact that, as a police superintendent, he had a duty to ensure that his image remained exemplary. The award was paid to him in three instalments. In the meantime the radio station had appealed against the judgment in the Prahova County Court and its appeal was upheld. Mr Marina's suit was thus dismissed. The County Court took the view that he had not sustained any loss, noting in particular that the presenters had merely read out a letter from a third party and that the radio had not committed any unlawful act. It added that when public interest questions concerning public figures were at stake, such individuals had to show a greater degree of tolerance on account of their position in society. The court lastly observed that Mr Marina had not made use of his right to reply. This judgment was delivered by a formation of judges of whom two had sat in the case previously brought by Mr Marina's ex-wife. A request made by those two judges to withdraw from the bench had been denied by the County Court at the start of the proceedings. In February 2015 the Ploiești Court of First Instance ordered the restitution of the sum paid by the radio station to Mr Marina. An enforcement procedure was initiated against him for that purpose.

## Law – Article 8

With regard to the content of the letter in question, the Court observed that it purported to give information about the private life of Mr Marina's ex-wife, mentioning that Mr Marina had refused to attend religious ceremonies after the death of his father and that he had addressed a financial demand to the family. It also contained insulting descriptions of Mr Marina. With regard to the judgment handed down by the County Court, the Court noted that it had characterised the subject dealt with in the programme as a matter of general interest, namely the stigmatising of the negative aspects of social reality. However, the text thus made public had focused on Mr Marina's family life and had purportedly revealed aspects of his private life that could not be considered to have contributed to a "debate of general interest" for the community. Furthermore, referring to the Court's case law, the County Court had stated in general terms, with reference to Mr Marina's public duties, that where questions of public interest concerning public figures were at stake, those individuals had to show a greater degree of tolerance in view of their position in society. The court should therefore have explained why the mere fact of holding the position of police superintendent reduced Mr Marina's expectation of privacy; he was not known to the public. The County Court did not comment on Mr Marina's past conduct vis-à-vis the media, but there was no evidence that he had previously shown any tolerance or complacency with regard to the publication of aspects concerning his private life; his immediate reaction to the broadcasting of the statements in fact appeared to be an indication to the contrary. Moreover, although the broadcast in question had been a satirical radio show, the court should have conducted a nuanced examination of the content of the statements in order to determine the extent to which the information about Mr Marina's private life and the language used had actually contributed to a public interest debate. The Court noted that the information thus given was offensive and had potential repercussions for Mr Marina's image and reputation. Lastly, the programme's presenters had read out the letter without any verification. It turned out, after it had been checked, that the information did not reflect reality. Consequently, the Court found that the domestic court had not properly weighed up the right to impart ideas, on the one hand, and the right to the protection of reputation and the rights of others on the other. It also observed that an examination of too general a nature had led the County Court to disregard certain aspects of the case and thus to take the view that a debate of general interest had been at stake and that Mr Marina had belonged to a category of individuals whose expectation of privacy could be restricted. Moreover, the very content of the information, its contribution to a debate on a matter of general interest and its lack of foundation in reality were not taken into account in weighing up the competing interests.

The Court thus found that the County Court had failed to fulfil its positive obligations under Article 8 of the Convention and that there had been a violation of this provision.

**Conclusion:** violation of article 8.

**133. Eur. Court of HR, Z. v. Bulgaria, judgement of 28 May 2020, application no. 39257/17. The case concerned the applicant's complaint of an ineffective official response to her allegation that she had been raped.**

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**No. 39257/17  
28/5/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**Z. v. Bulgaria**

An ineffective investigation of an allegation of rape is a violation of Article 8

**Basic facts**

The applicant, Ms Z, is a British national who lives in Bulgaria. On 26 February 2015 the applicant, 13 years old at the time, reported to the police that she had been raped the previous night when staying at a friend's house. A criminal investigation was immediately opened by the local district prosecution service and the applicant and alleged offender, G.S., her friend's boyfriend, were interviewed. The applicant stated that she had been sleeping when G.S. had got into bed with her. She had at first turned to face the wall and pretended to be asleep, but G.S. had started groping her so she pushed him away and clutched her legs together. However, he continued the assault and then raped her. G.S. denied the rape throughout the ensuing investigation, which also included further witness questioning (including the applicant's friend and friend's parents), an inspection of the crime scene, and a psychological examination of the applicant. The psychological report concluded among other things that the applicant had experienced intense fear and shame, which had temporarily blocked her reactions. In August 2015 the district prosecutor concluded that the applicant had been raped and sent the file to the regional prosecution service to proceed with the investigation. However, the regional prosecutor assigned to the case refused to follow the recommendation to prosecute for rape, finding that the evidence collected during the investigation, in particular the victim's statement, did not meet the legal requirement for that crime. The applicant's lawyer and mother continued to attempt to have G.S. prosecuted on charges of rape and requested a number of further investigative measures, in particular that the applicant be examined again following her frequent self-harming after the incident, without success. G.S. was thus indicted for the crime of sexual intercourse with a person under the age of 14. The courts found him guilty as charged in May 2016 and sentenced him to one year and four months' imprisonment, suspended for three years. Relying on Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) and Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), the applicant complained that the authorities had failed to effectively investigate her allegation of rape and, by prosecuting for a lesser offence, also had inadequately punished the offender.

**Law – Article 8 and 3**

The Court notes that in the present case a criminal investigation was initiated immediately into the applicant's complaint, and a number of investigative measures were carried out promptly. However, a number of further investigative measures were requested by the applicant's lawyer but were not carried out. Among those, important in the Court's view was the request that an expert examination of the applicant be ordered for traces of self-harming after the incident and their significance in interpreting the applicant's consent to the sexual act. Furthermore, the prosecutor failed to examine whether those actions of the applicant, pulling herself away, pretending to be asleep, pushing the perpetrator away and clutching her legs together, had had any significance in the particular circumstances for the charges that had been brought. Similarly, he failed to examine the applicant's mental state at the time of the assault in light of the psychological report, which had concluded that she had experienced intense fear

and dread, which were capable of temporarily blocking her reactions and that she had chosen to be silent as her feelings of fright and shame had been dominant at the time of the events. The prosecutor failed also to assess the overall context, the fact that the applicant was a girl aged less than fourteen, a guest in the home of a close friend who was also the intimate friend of the perpetrator, that she had been sleeping before the perpetrator initiated the sexual intercourse and that she had never had any relation with him prior to that. Thus, the prosecutor failed to examine, in particular, whether the applicant's actions and the overall context indicated a lack of consent by her and whether the perpetrator's actions could thus be qualified as rape. Neither was this failure - to examine the relevant circumstances in their overall context and to interpret domestic law in a manner defining rape as any non-consensual sexual intercourse - addressed and corrected by the first-instance court to which the case was referred for trial. The judge rapporteur was empowered by law to discontinue the judicial proceedings and to send the case to the prosecutor, had he or she identified breaches at the pre-trial stage of the victim's procedural rights. The first-instance court was also fully aware of the explicit request made by the applicant's lawyer that the perpetrator be prosecuted for rape.

In view of the above, the Court accepts that the applicant had raised her grievances sufficiently before the relevant national authorities and, in particular, her requests that the case be prosecuted for rape. The Court reaches this conclusion having particular regard to the requirements for a child-friendly justice in cases of sexual assault. While the proceedings as a whole, as noted above, should have complied with the requirement to conduct an effective investigation and prosecution into such complaints, neither the prosecution nor the court analysed the circumstances of the case from a child-sensitive stand-point. Due regard should be had, in such cases, to the principle of the best interest of the child and ensuring that an effective investigation and prosecution is carried out, without aggravating the trauma experienced by the child. In these particular circumstances, the Court accepts that the present complaint cannot be rejected on account of the applicant's failure to pursue the procedural route under domestic law for joining the domestic proceedings, namely as a private prosecutor. Thus, the Government's argument concerning non-exhaustion of domestic remedies should be dismissed. So, the failure to take into account the surrounding specific circumstances of the present case by the prosecutorial and judicial authorities alike was the result of their having attached little or no weight to the particular vulnerability of the applicant as a very young person, and the special psychological factors involved in cases concerning rape. Thus, the relevant national authorities did not carry out the careful scrutiny required for them to properly discharge their positive obligations under the Convention. The Court concluded, without expressing a position on the guilt of the perpetrator, that there has accordingly been a procedural violation of Articles 3 and 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 3 and Article 8

**134. Eur. Court of HR, P.N. v. Germany, judgement of 11 June 2020, application no. 74440/17. The case concerned a police order to collect information to identify the applicant, such as photographs of his face and body, including possible tattoos, as well as finger and palm prints.**

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**No. 7444/17  
11/6/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**P.N. v. Germany**

Five-year retention of photographs, description of the person, finger and palm prints of a repeat offender, subject to safeguards and individualised review: no violation

**Basic facts:**

The applicant, Mr P.N., is a German national. In August 2011 the Dresden police, relying on the Code of Criminal Procedure, ordered the gathering of the identification data as criminal proceedings had been opened against the applicant for receiving and handling stolen goods. He also had a previous criminal record and, in the police's, view the identification measures would help in the investigation of any future offences. The applicant appealed against the order but in May 2012 the Dresden police dismissed the appeal, while in March 2015 the Dresden Administrative Court dismissed a further appeal. Referring to his previous record, the court found that under the Code of Criminal Procedure it was legal to collect someone's data if there was a possibility that it might be needed for a future investigation. That was the case even if the proceedings for the handling of stolen goods had been discontinued, as they had been in June 2012. In May 2017 the Federal Constitutional Court declined to consider a constitutional complaint by the applicant. The police had already collected the data in question, in March 2017. The applicant complained that the police order to collect identification data from him had violated his rights protected by Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life, the home and correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

**Law- Article 8**

The taking and storage of various types of personal data had amounted to an interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life. In particular, the taking of palm prints constituted a measure which, both in its intensity and as regards the possible future use of the data obtained, was very similar to the taking of fingerprints. However, the impugned interference had been in accordance with the law and served the purpose of the prevention of crime as well as the protection of the rights of others, namely by facilitating the investigation of future crimes. A fair balance between the competing public and private interests and therefore fell within the respondent State's margin of appreciation. In particular, the domestic courts had conducted an individualised assessment of whether it was likely that the applicant might reoffend in the future. Even though the applicant had not been found guilty of a particularly serious offence, he had been convicted on numerous occasions and some of his offences were sufficiently serious for terms of imprisonment to be imposed on him. Moreover, criminal investigations had been opened repeatedly against the applicant, including in the years preceding the order for the collection of identification data. The Court could therefore accept that those discontinued proceedings, none of which had ended with the domestic authorities' finding that the applicant had been innocent and in the absence of any indication that they had been instituted arbitrarily, were also relevant,

to a very limited extent, in that assessment. Furthermore, the domestic courts had included his physical condition (the restrictions on his mobility caused by his rheumatoid arthritis) in their overall assessment and expressly found that the applicant's previous offences had not necessitated much physical movement. In accordance with domestic law, the outcome of the proceedings underlying the police order in issue was not relevant for the decision to collect and store the applicant's data. Moreover, two years after the impugned measure, the applicant had again been found guilty of an offence.

For the assessment of the proportionality of the interference, it was important that the collection and retention of the identification data here in issue – photographs, fingerprints, palm prints and a description of the person – had constituted a less intrusive interference than the collection of cellular samples and the retention of DNA profiles, which contained considerably more sensitive information.

As regards the duration of retention of the identification data in question, the relevant domestic law provided for specific deadlines for review of whether the continued storage of the data was still necessary. The purposes of the storage, as well as the type and significance of the reason for the storage, had to be taken into account in the assessment thereof. In a case like that of the applicant – an adult offender whose offences were neither of minor nor of special significance as defined by the relevant directive – personal data were to be deleted, as a rule, after five years, if there were no fresh criminal investigation proceedings against the applicant in that period. Therefore, the applicant could obtain the deletion of his data from the police register if his conduct showed that the data were no longer needed for the purposes of police work. Moreover, in the instant case there was a possibility of review – by the police authorities, subject to judicial review – of the necessity of further retaining the data in question. There was nothing to indicate that the identification data were insufficiently protected against abuse such as unauthorised access or dissemination. In view of the relatively limited intrusiveness and duration of the collection as such of the identification data in question, the limited effect of the retention of the data in an internal police database on the applicant's daily life, and the presence of safeguards, the impugned measure had constituted a proportionate interference with the applicant's right to respect for his private life.

**Conclusion:** No violation of Article 8.

**135. Eur. Court of HR, Omorefe v. Spain, judgement of 23 June 2020, application number 69339/16. The case concerned the placement in foster care and subsequent adoption of a child and the inability of the biological mother to retain contact with him.**

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No. 69339/16  
23/06/2020

Press release issued by the Registrar

**Omorefe v. Spain**

Inability for mother to retain contact with her son, fostered then adopted  
without her consent, was in breach of the Convention

**Basic facts**

The applicant, Pat Omorefe, is a Nigerian national who lives in Spain. At the relevant time she was living illegally in Spain. In February 2009 Ms Omorefe requested that her son be placed under the wardship of the authorities in a reception centre run by the regional government of Navarra, on account of personal and family difficulties (lack of income, housing and work, difficulties in the couple). The following day the

child was declared abandoned and placed in a reception centre. The following month Ms Omorefe was informed that the measure envisaged was foster care and that her son could be reintegrated into his biological family in the medium term provided that his parents achieved certain objectives. In March 2009 the appraisal board proposed the implementation of pre-adoption reception in foster care, finding that the mother had not attended all visits, that she was detached from her child during her visits and that her personal situation was very unstable. It was also stated that Ms Omorefe would not object to foster care but she had insisted that it should not deprive her of contact with her son. In May 2009 the Directorate-General for Family and Children suspended the visits because of Ms Omorefe's failure to be present at all scheduled visits and her difficulties in establishing an emotional bond with the child. It then asked the court to temporarily place the child in pre-adoption foster care and to relieve Ms Omorefe of her parental authority. The minor was thus placed in foster care by decision of the court. In July 2009 Ms Omorefe appealed against this decision. Her application was rejected. Subsequently, she appealed to the Audiencia Provincial court of Navarra, which admitted her appeal, finding that the child's adoption could not take place without the mother's consent. The Authority lodged an appeal on points of law, which was declared inadmissible. The pre-adoption reception measure was cancelled in February 2014. In March 2014 Ms Omorefe asked to be allowed to visit her son. Having received no reply from the authorities, she lodged an appeal complaining of the non-recognition of her contact rights.

In June 2015 the first-instance court granted her visiting contact for one hour per month, for supervised visits at a family meeting facility run by the authorities. In the meantime the Authority had taken further steps to arrange for the pre-adoption reception of the minor by his foster family, followed by his adoption, submitting a report in which it noted the child's links with the foster family, with whom he had been living for five years, and also his satisfactory development and positive evolution. In October 2015 the Audiencia Provincial authorised the adoption of Ms Omorefe's son, finding that the lack of consent of the biological mother was not an obstacle if the adoption was in the minor's interest. Ms Omorefe's amparo appeal to the Constitutional Court was declared inadmissible.

## **Law – Article 8**

The Court took the view that the decisions leading to the adoption of Ms Omorefe's child constituted an interference with the exercise of the right to respect for the private and family life of both Ms Omorefe and her biological child. Such interference was provided for by law and pursued legitimate aims, namely the protection of the child's rights and freedoms. As to whether the interference had been necessary in a democratic society, the Court found a serious lack of expedition in the procedure conducted by the authorities responsible for the wardship, placement and adoption of the child and by certain courts of first instance in that connection, particularly noting their failure to take account of the conclusions of the reports drawn up and decisions taken by the various administrative bodies throughout the examination of the case.

The Court further noted that it had not been shown by the Government that there had been any follow-up to the decision of the court, the Audiencia Provincial (October 2015), to the effect that the possibility of a "form of relationship or contact through visits or communication with the biological mother" could be explored if that were in the best interests of the minor. In the circumstances of the case, the Court found on the one hand that it was understandable for Ms Omorefe's child to have been taken into care by the authorities, since it was the mother herself who had requested wardship. On the other hand, this decision should have been accompanied promptly by the most appropriate measures to enable an in-depth assessment to be made of the child's situation and his relationship with his parents, if necessary with the father and mother separately, in accordance with the applicable legal framework. This situation was particularly serious given the age of the child, who was barely two months old at the time of his initial placement. The Court was not persuaded by the reasons given by the domestic authorities to justify the minor's pre-adoption foster placement and then his adoption, in spite of the clear opposition of Ms Omorefe, who had only been able to exercise her contact rights for three months, at the start of

the proceedings, thus suggesting that from the outset the authorities had intended to place the child with a foster family with a view to adoption. The Court also noted that the administrative authorities had not envisaged any of the other, less radical, measures available under Spanish law such as temporary placement or simple placement, not with a view to adoption. Such measures would also have been respectful towards the foster parents, as they would not have raised false hopes. The role of the social protection authorities was precisely to assist persons in difficulty, in this case the child's mother, who had been forced to voluntarily place her son in care in view of the seriousness of her personal and family difficulties.

Consequently, the Court took the view that the process which led to the decision on the adoption of Ms Omorefe's son had not been conducted in such a way as to ensure that all of her views and interests were duly taken into account. It therefore found that the procedure in question had not been surrounded by safeguards commensurate with the seriousness of the interference and the interests at stake. The Spanish authorities had not taken appropriate and sufficient steps to ensure respect for Ms Omorefe's right to retain contact with her child, thus breaching her right to respect for her private and family life. There had accordingly been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 8.

**136. Eur. Court of HR, Bagirov v. Azerbaijan, judgement of 25 June 2020, application number 81024/12 and 28198/15. The case concerned applicant's complaint that he had been suspended from practising law for one year, then disbarred because of statements he had made about police brutality and the functioning of the judicial system in the country.**

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**Nos. 81024/12 and 28198/15  
25/06/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **Bagirov v. Azerbaijan**

The suspension from practising law for one year of a lawyer because of statements he had made about police brutality and the functioning of the judicial system in the country is a violation of Article 10 and 8.

### **Basic facts**

The applicant, Khalid Zakir oglu Bagirov, is an Azerbaijani national. In February 2011 Mr Bagirov attended a meeting with other lawyers to discuss problems encountered by the legal profession in Azerbaijan when he commented on police brutality and the recent death in custody of an individual, E.A., whose mother subsequently became his client. His comments were reported in the press. At the request of the head of the Baku City Chief Police Department, the ABA instituted disciplinary proceedings against the applicant for defamation of the police. In August 2011 the Presidium of the ABA suspended the applicant from practising law for one year because he had breached lawyer confidentiality. He challenged this decision before the courts, arguing that he had not disclosed any confidential information as E.A.'s mother had already given a press conference alleging that the police had tortured and killed her son before the February meeting and before she had become his client. The courts did not directly address his arguments, reiterating the Presidium's findings of a breach of confidentiality. In 2014, further disciplinary proceedings were instituted against him for remarks that he had made while representing an opposition politician, Ilgar Eldar oglu Mammadov, at his criminal trial (see the case of Ilgar Mammadov v. Azerbaijan (No. 2), application no. 919/15). The Presidium referred

the case to the domestic courts, which in July 2015 ordered the applicant's disbarment. The first-instance court found in particular that his remarks about the functioning of the judicial system and about one judge in particular had "cast a shadow over our State" and "tarnished the reputation of the judiciary". The first-instance judgment was upheld by the Baku Court of Appeal in September 2015 and by the Supreme Court in January 2016. Relying in particular on Article 10 (freedom of expression) and Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights, Mr Bagirov alleged that the disciplinary sanctions had breached his right to freedom of expression and respect for private life.

### **Law – Article 10 and 8**

The applicant's suspension had amounted to an interference with the exercise of his right to freedom of expression. In so far as the relevant decision had referred to the applicant's intention to organise protests against police brutality, it had failed to specify which domestic-law provision had been breached in that respect. Nor did the Court see any provision preventing a lawyer from calling for peaceful protests. The applicant's suspension had also been motivated by a breach of lawyer confidentiality. However, the applicant had not breached the secrecy of the judicial investigation by commenting on or disclosing any document relating to the investigation. He had been sanctioned merely for reiterating a mother's arguments concerning the circumstances of her son's death in police custody, which she had voiced at a press conference. It did not appear from the relevant law that the use of information available in the public domain fell under lawyer confidentiality. On the contrary, information falling under lawyer confidentiality must have been obtained by a lawyer in the furtherance of his or her professional activity. However, the applicant had become the mother's representative in the proceedings relating to her son's death only after having made his public statements. Therefore, when making those statements, the applicant could not have obtained the information in question in connection with carrying out his professional activity. In any event, the mother, who had subsequently become his client, had not complained about his action. The domestic courts, when confirming the applicant's suspension, had failed to address properly his arguments in that respect. The interference had therefore not been "prescribed by law".

The remarks, accusing a judge of a lack of capacity to be a judge, had been disrespectful and possibly offensive. However, the domestic courts had not given any consideration to the fact that the applicant had made the impugned statements in a courtroom in the course of the criminal proceedings in his capacity as his client's lawyer. They had not been repeated outside the courtroom, for instance in the media. In the courtroom, the principle of fairness militated in favour of a free and even forceful exchange of arguments between parties. Moreover, those comments had mainly expressed the applicant's objections to the decisions made by the domestic courts in the criminal proceedings against Mr Ilgar Mammadov. When the impugned remarks were made, the Court had already ruled in the case of Ilgar Mammadov v. Azerbaijan, finding that there had been a breach of Articles 5 and 18 of the Convention. The Court subsequently found, in Ilgar Mammadov v. Azerbaijan (no. 2), that there had been a number of serious shortcomings in the trial. The domestic court's finding that the applicant had misused his right to freedom of expression "with a view to casting a shadow over our State and statehood" had been irrelevant for the purposes of Article 10 and could not be considered as a reason for restricting the freedom of expression in a democratic society. The disbarment could not but be regarded as a harsh sanction, capable of having a chilling effect on the performance by lawyers of their duties as defence counsel. Furthermore, the existence of the previous disciplinary proceedings against the applicant could not justify his disbarment, as the applicant's suspension had not been prescribed by law and the Court had already found a breach of his right to freedom of expression on that account. In sum, the reasons given by the domestic courts in support of the applicant's disbarment had not been relevant and sufficient and the sanction imposed on the applicant had been disproportionate to the legitimate aim pursued.

The Court also unanimously found a violation of Article 8 on account of the applicant's suspension and subsequent disbarment. Noting a pattern of arbitrary arrest, detention and other measures taken in respect of government critics, civil society activists and human rights defenders, the Court underlined that an alleged need in a democratic society to sanction a lawyer by disbarment in circumstances such as the present would need to be supported by particularly weighty reasons.

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 10 and 8.

**137. Eur. Court of HR, Y.T. v. Bulgaria, judgement of 09 July 2020, application number 4171/16.**

The case concerned a transsexual (Y.T.) who had taken steps to change his physical appearance and whose request for (female to male) gender reassignment had been refused by the Bulgarian courts. The Court concluded that the domestic authorities' refusal to grant legal recognition to Y.T.'s gender reassignment, without giving relevant and sufficient reasons, had thus constituted an unjustified interference with Y.T.'s right to respect for his private life.

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**No.417001/16**  
**09/7/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**Y.T. v. Bulgaria**

Violation of the right to private life of a transsexual of male appearance whose request for gender reassignment was dismissed without reasons

**Basic facts**

The applicant, Y.T., is a Bulgarian national. At his birth, Y.T. was recorded in the civil-status registers as female, with a corresponding female forename. However, he claims that he became aware of his male gender identity during adolescence and that he has lived in society as a man with a male forename and surname. Y.T. has been co-habiting since 2008 with a woman, who gave birth to a child in 2010 via donor insemination. Y.T. and the child consider each other as father and son. In the photograph on his identity card, issued in 2011, Y.T.'s appearance was that of a man. In 2014, in the context of his gender transition process, Y.T. voluntarily underwent surgery to remove his mammary glands and parenchymal tissue. In 2015 he applied to the district court, asking that his forenames, patronymic and family name be changed in the electronic civil-status registers, together with the indication of his sex and his civil identification number; he considered that the data recorded in the register did not correspond to reality. His request was rejected by the district court and Y.T. lodged an appeal.

In 2016 the regional court upheld the first-instance judgment. It considered, among other points, that surgical operations did not change a person's true sex but only his or her appearance and the morphology of sex.

**Law- Article 8**

The Court found that it was required to determine whether the courts' refusal to grant the applicant's requests for an amendment to the entry concerning his sex in the civil-status registers had amounted to a disproportionate interference with his right to respect for his private life. It held, in the present case, that the domestic courts had noted that Y.T. was transsexual on the basis of detailed information concerning his psychological and medical state, together with his family and social lifestyle. However,

the courts had refused to authorise a change to the “sex” entry in the civil status registers. The reasoning for their decisions referred to various arguments and was based on three essential elements. Firstly, the courts expressed the conviction that gender reassignment was not possible where the individual had been born with opposing sexual physiological characteristics. Secondly, they held that an individual’s socio-psychological aspiration could not in itself be sufficient to grant a request for gender reassignment. Lastly, the domestic law did not provide for any criteria that would allow for such reassignment for legal purposes. With regard to this last point, the regional court had expressly stated that it attached no importance to the case-law trend to the effect that it was appropriate to recognise gender reassignment independently of whether medical treatment had been followed in advance. Thus, the judicial authorities had established that Y.T. had begun a process of gender transition, changing his physical appearance, and that his social and family identity had already been that of a male for some time. Nonetheless, they had considered, in essence, that the public interest required that the legal change of sex should not be permitted and had then rejected his request. However, the courts had given no explanation of their reasoning as to the exact nature of this public interest and had not balanced it against the applicant’s right to legal recognition of his gender identity.

In those circumstances, the Court failed to identify what public-interest grounds could have justified the refusal to ensure that Y.T.’s male condition corresponded with the relevant entry referring to that condition in the civil-status registers. The Court identified this as rigidity in the reasoning with regard to recognition of Y.T.’s gender identity, which had placed him, for an unreasonable and continuous period, in a troubling position, in which he was liable to experience feelings of vulnerability, humiliation and anxiety. In consequence, the Court concluded that the domestic authorities’ refusal to grant legal recognition to Y.T.’s gender reassignment, without giving relevant and sufficient reasons, and without explaining why it had been possible to recognise the same gender reassignment in other cases, had constituted an unjustified interference with the applicant’s right to respect for his private life. There had therefore been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 8

**138. Eur. Court of HR, Rana v. Hungary, judgement of 16 July 2020, application number 40888/17. The case concerned a transgender man from Iran who had obtained asylum in Hungary but could not legally change his gender and name in that country. The Court concluded that a fair balance had not been struck between the public interest and the applicant’s right to respect for his private life owing to the refusal to give him access to the legal gender recognition procedure.**

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**No. 4088/17  
16/07/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**Rana v. Hungary**

A transgender man’s lack of access to a procedure to recognise his gender violated the Convention

**Basic facts**

The applicant is an Iranian national who lives in Budapest. The applicant was born a female in Iran but has from an early age identified as a male. In 2015 he applied for asylum in Hungary and in December

of that year the asylum authority granted his application, finding that he had suffered persecution in Iran owing to his gender identity (transsexuality). In March 2016 the applicant applied for a gender and name change to the Hungarian Immigration and Citizenship Office given that his Iranian documents identified him as a female.

The Office issued a formal rejection decision without examining the application on the merits, holding that it did not have jurisdiction to take any further action. As the applicant's birth had not been registered in Hungary, the application could not be forwarded to the registrar.

The Budapest Administrative and Labour Court dismissed an appeal by the applicant in November 2016 and in February of the following year the applicant lodged a constitutional complaint. The Constitutional Court rejected the complaint in June 2018, finding that the judge of the lower court could not have found differently in the applicant's case given the lack in the law of any statutory basis for the changing the names of non-Hungarian citizens.

However, it emphasised that the right to change one's name was a fundamental one, and that making such a change went hand in hand with changing gender. It found the legislative omission to be disproportionately restrictive and unconstitutional and called on Parliament to find a solution to allow lawfully settled people without Hungarian birth certificates to change their name, for example by entering the name change on other official documents issued by the Hungarian authorities. The legislative change requested by the Constitutional Court has not yet been carried out. The applicant complains that the authorities' refusal to change his name and sex marker from "female" to "male" in his identity documents violated Article 8 (right to respect for private and family) of the European Convention.

#### **Law- Article 8**

The Court examined the case from the standpoint of the State's positive obligation to secure the applicant's right to respect for his private life, reiterating its case-law on that issue. The Court did not question the Hungarian authorities' choice to regulate the legal recognition of agender change as a special kind of name-changing procedure performed by a registrar keeping the register of births. However, in balancing the competing interests at stake, States had limited discretion ("margin of appreciation") when it came to an essential aspect of individuals' intimate identity, such as gender identity in the applicant's case. It took note of the Constitutional Court's finding of a legislative gap, which excluded all lawfully resident non-Hungarians from accessing the name-change and gender recognition procedure regardless of their circumstances, as a disproportionate restriction of their right to human dignity. Furthermore, the authorities had rejected the applicant's application on purely formal grounds, without examining his situation, thus not weighing up the competing interests at stake. In particular, they had not taken account of the fact that he had been given asylum precisely because he was persecuted in his country of origin on the grounds of his transgenderism. The Court considered that he could not reasonably have been expected to seek recognition of his gender change in Iran. The Court observed that providing access to a procedure for legal gender recognition to people without Hungarian birth certificates, along with an examination of their claims on the merits, could be an additional administrative burden on the authorities. However, that could not by itself justify an unconditional refusal of the applicant's request. In addition, the positive obligation set out by the Constitutional Court was relatively narrow and the possible impact on the State did not appear to be severe.

The Court considered that a fair balance between the public interest and the applicant's right to respect for his private life had not been struck when he had been denied access to the legal gender recognition procedure. There had therefore been a violation of Article 8.

**Conclusion:** Violations of Article 8.

**139. Eur. Court of HR, Yunusova and Yunusov v. Azerbaijan, judgement of 16 July 2020, application no. 68817/14. The case concerned the detention of human-rights defenders for the purpose of silencing and punishing them for their NGO activities. The court concluded that there has been violation of the Convention.**

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**No 68817/14  
16/07/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**Yunusova and Yunusov v. Azerbaijan (no. 2)**

Detention of human-rights defenders for the purpose of silencing and punishing them for their NGO activities is a violation of the Convention

**Basic facts**

The first applicant was a well-known Azerbaijani human-rights defender and civil-society activist, and the director of an association named the “Institute for Peace and Democracy” and the second applicant, her husband, was a researcher and the head of department in the association. In 2005 the first applicant launched a joint project with a non-governmental organisation based in Armenia to focus on peace and reconciliation between the two countries.

On 25 April 2014 the applicants’ bank accounts were frozen within the framework of a criminal case against a third party. On the evening of 28 April 2014, the State Border Service at the airport did not allow the applicants to board a flight. Their luggage and handbags were searched, and their passports and various documents seized. In July 2014 the first applicant was charged with large-scale fraud, illegal entrepreneurship, large-scale tax evasion, high treason and falsification of official documents and the second applicant with large-scale fraud and high treason. They were remanded in custody. In August 2015 they were convicted and sentenced to eight and a half and seven years’ imprisonment respectively. In December 2015 the applicants’ sentences were commuted to five years’ imprisonment suspended on probation.

**Law- Article 8**

The first applicant had complained that a male police officer had intruded whilst she was using the toilet and observed her in a state of undress. The domestic courts’ decisions had been totally silent in this regard. The impugned intrusion had clearly amounted to an interference with the first applicant’s right to respect for her private life. The interference could not be regarded as “necessary in a democratic society”: there had been no emergency situation requiring the officer in question to take any imminent action in order to protect the first applicant; nor had she presented a risk of self-harm. The inspection of the applicants’ luggage and handbags, the searches of their home and the association’s office and seizure of various materials had been carried out in the context of criminal proceedings against a third party. However, it had not been explained why the domestic authorities had considered that carrying out the impugned searches and seizures would help to further that investigation and/or to protect national security. The mere fact that the third party in issue knew the applicants well and had cooperated with the association could not be considered, in the absence of any concrete purpose for those measures, as reasonable grounds for suspecting that a specific piece of evidence relevant for the investigation of that criminal case might have been found as a result. Furthermore, several days prior to the applicants’ arrest at the airport, the authorities had instituted criminal proceedings in connection with alleged irregularities in the financial activities of a number of NGOs following which several notable NGO activists had been arrested, whose offices and premises had also been searched. Therefore, in the light

of the specific context of the present case and the lack of any concrete reasons put forward either in the domestic or in the Convention proceedings justifying the measures at stake, the Government had failed to convincingly demonstrate that the authorities had been guided by the legitimate aims relied on, that is to say the investigation of the criminal case against the third party or the prevention of the crime of high treason and the protection of national security. Accordingly, the impugned interference had not pursued any of the legitimate aims enumerated in paragraph 2 of Article 8.

**Article 18, taken together with Article 5 § 1:**

The applicants' arrest and pre-trial detention had not been carried out for a purpose prescribed under Article 5 § 1 (c) of the Convention, as the charges against them had not been based on a "reasonable suspicion". The Court had found that its judgments in a series of similar cases had reflected a pattern of arbitrary arrest and detention of government critics, civil society activists and human-rights defenders through retaliatory prosecutions and misuse of the criminal law in breach of Article 18. Firstly, as regards the applicants' status, the first applicant had been a well-known human-rights defender and the second applicant had been closely involved in her activities. Secondly, the applicants had been charged with serious criminal offences whose core constituent elements could not reasonably be found in the existing facts. Thirdly, the applicants' arrest had been accompanied by stigmatising statements made by public officials against the local NGOs and their leaders, including the applicants, who had been labelled as "traitors". Those statements had not simply concerned an alleged breach of domestic legislation on NGOs and grants, but rather had the purpose of delegitimising their work. Fourthly, the general context of the increasingly harsh and restrictive legislative regulation of NGO activity and funding could not be simply ignored in a case like the present one, where such a situation had led to NGO activists being prosecuted for alleged failures to comply with legal formalities of an administrative nature while carrying out their work. Fifthly, the applicant's situation had to be viewed against the backdrop of arrests of other notable civil society activists and human-rights defenders who had been detained and charged to a large extent with similar criminal offences. Thus, the authorities' actions had been driven by improper reasons and the actual purpose of the impugned measures had been to silence and to punish the applicants for their NGO activities. The Court also found, unanimously, violations of Article 5 § 1 on account of the applicants' unlawful deprivation of liberty at the airport, and their subsequent detention in the absence of a "reasonable suspicion" of their having committed a criminal offence; of Article 5 § 4 on account of the lack of adequate judicial review of the lawfulness of their detention; of Article 6 § 2 because the press statement of the national authorities had contained declaration of their guilt; of Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 on account of the unlawful freezing of their bank accounts, of Article 13 in conjunction with Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 and Article 2 of Protocol No. 4 on account of the inability to challenge the seizure of their passports and the freezing of their bank accounts before the domestic courts; and of Article 34 on account of the impediments to communication between the applicants and their representative, whose licence to practise law had been suspended.

**Conclusion:** Violation of Article 8 and 18 taken together with Article 5

**140. Eur. Court of HR, D v. France, judgement of 16 July 2020, application number 11288/18.**  
The case concerned the refusal to record in the French register of births, marriages and deaths the details of the birth certificate of a child born abroad through a gestational surrogacy arrangement in so far as the certificate designated the intended mother, who was also the child's genetic mother, as the mother. The Court concluded that this refusal was not in breach of the right to respect for private life, in so far as a legal parent-child relationship can be established through adoption.

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**No. 11288/18**  
**16/07/2020**

Press Release issued by the Registrar

**D v. France**

Refusal to register the birth details of a child born abroad through surrogacy not in breach of the right to respect for private life, in so far as a legal parent-child relationship can be established through adoption

**Basic facts**

The applicants were born and live in France. The third applicant was born in Ukraine through a gestational surrogacy arrangement. Her birth certificate, issued on 3 October 2012 in Kyiv, states that the first applicant is her mother and the second is her father, without mentioning the woman who gave birth to the child. On 20 September 2014 the first two applicants applied to the French embassy in Kyiv to have the details of the birth certificate entered in the French register of births, marriages and deaths. The deputy consul referred the matter to the public prosecutor in Nantes. On 27 January 2016 Mr and Mrs D brought proceedings against the public prosecutor in the Nantes tribunal de grande instance seeking an order for the details of the child's birth certificate to be entered in the French register. On 12 January 2017 the Nantes tribunal de grande instance granted the application. It emphasised, among other points, that the fact that the birth certificate designated the first applicant as the mother, even though she had not given birth, could not, having regard to the best interests of the child as determined by the European Court of Human Rights, justify a refusal to recognise the legal mother-child relationship, which was "the only relationship recognised as legally established in the country of birth" and which therefore corresponded to the legal reality. On 18 December 2017 the Rennes Court of Appeal upheld the judgment of 12 January 2017.

**Law- Article 8**

The Court observed that the applicants had argued in substance that the refusal to record the details of the third applicant's Ukrainian birth certificate in so far as it designated the first applicant as her mother amounted to disproportionate interference with the child's right to respect for her private life, given that the first applicant was her genetic mother. The Court had previously ruled on the issue of the legal parent-child relationship between the child and the intended father where the latter was the biological father (see the judgments in *Menesson v. France* and *Labassee v. France*). According to its case-law, the fact that a genetic link existed did not mean that the child's right to respect for his or her private life required the legal relationship with the intended father to be established specifically by means of registration of the details of the foreign birth certificate. The Court saw no reason in the circumstances of the present case to reach a different decision with regard to recognition of the legal relationship with the intended mother, who was also the genetic mother. It could not therefore be said that the refusal of the request to register the details of the third applicant's Ukrainian birth certificate in respect of the first applicant amounted to disproportionate interference with the child's right to respect for her private life simply because the first applicant was her genetic mother, given that the legal mother-child relationship

could in fact be established by other means. As the Court had observed in its advisory opinion no. P16-2018-001, adoption produced similar effects to registration of the foreign birth details when it came to recognising the legal relationship between the child and the intended mother. The Court concluded that adoption of the spouse's child constituted in the present case an effective and sufficiently speedy mechanism enabling the legal relationship between the first and third applicants to be recognised.

#### **Article 14 read in conjunction with Article 8**

The Court noted that the complaint concerning the discrimination allegedly suffered by the third applicant in the enjoyment of her right to respect for her private life was not manifestly ill founded, nor was it inadmissible on any other ground referred to in Article 35 of the Convention. It therefore declared it admissible. In the Court's view, the difference in treatment between French children born abroad through surrogacy and other French children born outside the country did not lie in the fact that the former – unlike the latter – could not obtain recognition in domestic law of a legal mother-child relationship with the person named on the foreign birth certificate. Rather, it consisted in the fact that at the relevant time the former, in contrast to the latter, could not obtain the entry in the register of the full details of that birth certificate and had to have recourse to adoption in order to have the mother-child relationship legally established. As the Court had already emphasised, adoption of the spouse's child constituted in the present case an effective mechanism for recognition of the legal relationship between the first and third applicants. The Court therefore accepted that the difference in treatment of which the applicants complained with regard to the means of recognition of the legal relationship between such children and their genetic mother had an objective and reasonable justification.

**Conclusion:** No violation of Article 8 and Article 14 read in conjunction with Article 8

**141. Eur. Court of HR, Veljkovic-Jukic v. Switzerland, judgement of 21 July 2020, application no; 59534/14. The case concerned the withdrawal of the permanent residence permit of a Croatian national who has lived in Switzerland since the age of 14, because of her criminal conviction for drug trafficking, and her possible removal from Switzerland. The Court found that Switzerland had not overstepped the margin of appreciation afforded to it, particularly given the seriousness of her conviction for a drug-related offence and the fact that the applicant and her family members could integrate without major difficulties in one of the destination countries proposed by the Federal Supreme Court: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia or Serbia.**

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**No. 59534/14  
21/07/2020**

Press Release issued by the Registrar

#### **Veljkovic-Jukic v. Switzerland**

No breach of the Convention in withdrawing the Swiss permanent residence permit of a Croatian national convicted of drug trafficking

#### **Basic Facts**

The applicant, Renata Veljkovic-Jukic, is a Croatian national who lives in Switzerland, with her husband, a Serbian national, and their three children. Ms Veljkovic-Jukic and her husband were granted leave to remain in Switzerland at the ages of 14 (in 1995) and 8 (in 1991) respectively. In June 2012 the Canton of Zurich Higher Court, on appeal, sentenced Ms Veljkovic-Jukic to three years' imprisonment, 30

months of which were suspended, for a drugs offence and for driving a vehicle while incapacitated. In particular, she was found guilty of the trafficking in April 2010 of approximately 1 kg of heroin and 56 g of cocaine for a sum of 126,000 Swiss francs (CHF), of which CHF 6,000 was apparently intended for her, and of driving a vehicle after using cocaine. She served her sentence under a semi-custodial regime and was released in July 2013. In September 2013, relying on Ms Veljkovic-Jukic's conviction and long-term custodial sentence,

the Migration Office withdrew her permanent residence permit and ordered her removal from Switzerland. She appealed against this decision, but her appeal was rejected at first instance and on appeal. The Federal Supreme Court held, in particular, that the security interest in the applicant's removal took precedence over her private interests and that this ground was also valid for persons who, like the applicant, had been residing in Switzerland for more than 15 years continuously and in a lawful manner. It also held that the applicant's return to Bosnia and Herzegovina (where she had spent 14 years as a child) or to Serbia or Croatia did not appear to be precluded for any reason. It further considered that her husband and children could follow her or that, if the family were to remain in Switzerland, contact could be maintained through visits and the use of available means of communication. Furthermore, it indicated that the applicant also had the possibility of applying for a new residence permit. In August 2014 the Migration Office issued an exclusion order against Ms Veljkovic-Jukic, banning her from Switzerland for the period from 31 August 2014 to 30 August 2021. However, the deportation order against the applicant was not enforced, pending the outcome of the proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights.

### **Law-Article 8**

The Court considered that the decision to withdraw Ms Veljkovic-Jukic's permanent resident permit and to order her removal from Switzerland amounted to an interference with her right to respect for her "private" and "family" life. The interference had been in accordance with the Federal Aliens Act and pursued a legitimate aim: the prevention of disorder or crime.

The national authorities had conducted an adequate and convincing examination of the facts and relevant considerations, balancing Ms Veljkovic-Jukic's personal interests against the general interests of society. The Federal Supreme Court had admittedly attached great significance of the seriousness of the drug trafficking offence committed by Ms Veljkovic-Jukic, but it had also taken account of the criteria set out by the Court in the Üner judgment, including, in particular,

Ms Veljkovic-Jukic's personal situation, the extent to which she was integrated into Swiss life and the potential difficulties that she and her family would face were they to return to their country of origin. Thus, the Federal Supreme Court had acknowledged that Ms Veljkovic-Jukic's removal after 18 years spent in Switzerland was a very harsh measure, which was, however, to be nuanced by her young age and the fact that she had arrived in Switzerland aged 15, after having spent all of her childhood and part of her youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A return to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia or Serbia would not therefore be impossible. The Federal Supreme Court had also examined the situation of the children, finding that separation from their mother would amount to a serious interference in their family life. However, it considered that Ms Veljkovic-Jukic's husband, a Serb national, could follow her to her country of origin, and that the children's integration ought not to pose a problem, given that they were still young enough to adapt. In consequence, having regard in particular to the seriousness of Ms Veljkovic-Jukic's conviction for a drug-related offence, and the fact that she and her family members could integrate without major difficulties in one of the destination countries proposed by the Federal Supreme Court (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia or Serbia), the Court considered that Switzerland had not overstepped the margin of appreciation afforded to it. However, the Court considered it desirable that the national authorities reassess Ms Veljkovic-Jukic's situation in the light of the developments since the Federal Supreme Court's judgment prior to deciding whether to enforce the measure, having regard

in particular to her conduct throughout the proceedings and the possibility, available to her, of applying for a new residence permit (section 43 of the Federal Aliens Act).

**Conclusion:** No violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**142. Eur. Court of HR, Pormes v. the Netherlands, judgement of 28 July 2020, application number 25402/14. The case concerned the applicant's complaint about the Dutch authorities' refusal to grant him a residence permit, despite him living in the Netherlands since he was almost four years' old.**

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**No. 25402/14**

**28/07/2020**

Press release issued by the Registrar

**Pormes v. the Netherlands**

There had been no violation of Article 8 concerning the refusal to grant a residence permit for national security purposes

**Basic facts**

The applicant, Hein Pormes, is an Indonesian national who arrived in the Netherlands in 1991 after his mother, who was Indonesian, died. He was brought to the country by his presumed father, a Dutch national, who also died in 1999. He was brought up by an uncle and aunt, who are Dutch nationals and whom he considers to be his foster parents. In 2004, when he turned 17, he found out that, contrary to what he had always assumed, he might not have Dutch nationality. He learned that he had arrived in the country on a tourist visa which had expired several months after his arrival and that neither his presumed father nor his foster parents had taken any steps to regularise his stay. In 2006 he thus applied for a temporary residence permit. However, in 2007 the Deputy Minister of Justice rejected his application, because he represented a danger to the public following a recent conviction for indecent assault and four counts of attempted indecent assault. Balancing his ties to the Netherlands and the difficulties he would face adjusting to life in Indonesia against the seriousness of his criminal offences, the Deputy Minister emphasised that his stay in the Netherlands had never been lawful. In 2008 the Deputy Minister rejected Mr Pormes's objection, maintaining her position and observing that he had in the meantime been convicted again for the same offences. He appealed against the decision in the courts, but the Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of State ultimately in 2013 held that the Deputy Minister had rightly attached great weight to the offences he had committed given their nature and seriousness and the fact that he was a recidivist. The ruling also pointed out that Mr Pormes was an adult and was aware that he did not have a residence permit when he had committed the offences.

**Law – Article 8**

The Court said that, given the length of his residence in, and the strength of his ties with the Netherlands, the applicant's relocation to Indonesia would have entailed a certain amount of hardship. Nevertheless, he was a healthy adult man, and it has neither been argued nor has it appeared that he was unable to manage by himself in that country. In that latter context the Court notes that the applicant possessed a number of practical skills such as metal work and cookery, and there is no reason to assume that he would not have been able to adjust to Indonesian culture and to learn the language. Contacts with his foster family and others in the Netherlands may have been maintained through modern means of communication. The Court further observed that no exclusion order was imposed on the applicant, which

leaves open the possibility that he may apply for a visa in order to make visits to the Netherlands. In addition, the Court recognises that in the case at hand every domestic decision-making body had specific regard to the State's obligations under Article 8 of the Convention. The Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of State held that the Deputy Minister had rightly attached great weight to the offences committed by the applicant in view of their nature and seriousness and the fact that the applicant was a recidivist. In its ruling it noted also that when the applicant had committed the offences at issue, he was an adult and was aware that he did not have a residence permit. Having found that all relevant elements had been addressed in the balancing exercise carried out by the Deputy Minister, it reached the same conclusion, namely that the interests served by denying the applicant a residence permit were not outweighed by the latter's Article 8 rights. In the light of all of the above, and having regard in particular to the nature, seriousness and number of the offences committed by the applicant, including at a time when he knew that his residence status in the Netherlands was precarious, the Court is satisfied that the domestic authorities did not attribute excessive weight to the general interest in the prevention of disorder or crime and have not overstepped the margin of appreciation afforded to them in the circumstances of the present case. Therefore, there had not been any violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion:** No violation of Article 8.

143. *Eur. Court of HR, Hurbain v. Belgium*, judgment of 22 June 2021, application no 57292/16. The case concerned an order to anonymise an article in a newspaper's electronic archive (which referred to a person's involvement in a fatal road accident for which he was subsequently convicted). The domestic court had taken the view that to keep the article online could cause indefinite and serious harm to the driver's reputation, giving him a "virtual criminal record", when he had not only served his sentence after a final conviction but had also been rehabilitated. It had thus found that the most effective way to ensure respect for his private life, without disproportionately affecting Mr Hurbain's freedom of expression, would be to anonymise the article on the newspaper's website by replacing the individual's full name with the letter X. The Belgian courts had weighed up the driver's right to respect for his private life, on the one hand, and Mr Hurbain's freedom of expression, on the other, in accordance with the criteria laid down in the Court's case-law. The Court of Appeal had, in particular, considered the harm sustained by the driver on account of the article being online, having regard to the passage of time (about 20 years) since its original publication and to the fact that its anonymisation on the website of Le Soir would not affect the text of the original article and would be the most effective and proportionate measure, among the various options. The reasons given by the domestic courts had thus been relevant and sufficient, and the measure imposed on Mr Hurbain could be regarded as proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued (right to respect for the driver's private life) and as striking a fair balance between the competing rights at stake.

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No: 57292/16  
22/06/2022

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **HURBAIN V. BELGIUM**

An order to anonymise the identity of rehabilitated offender in a newspaper's electronic archive does not violate the right to freedom of expression

#### **Principal facts**

The applicant, Patrick Hurbain, is a Belgian national who was born in 1959 and lives in Genappe (Belgium). He is the publisher of Le Soir, one of Belgium's leading French-language newspapers.

In a 1994 print edition, an article in Le Soir reported on a car accident that had caused the death of two people and injured three others. The article mentioned the full name of the driver, who was convicted in 2000. He served his sentence and was rehabilitated in 2006.

In 2008 the newspaper created an electronic version of its archives from 1989 onwards (including the above-mentioned article), which became freely available on its website. In 2010 the driver applied to Le Soir, requesting that the article be removed from the newspaper's electronic archives or at least anonymised. The request mentioned his profession and the fact that the article appeared among the hits when his name was entered in several search engines.

In 2011 the newspaper's legal department refused to remove the article from its archives, but indicated that it had given notice to the administrator of the search engine Google to dereference the article. Before the domestic courts, Mr Hurbain argued that those steps remained pending.

In 2012 the driver sued Mr Hurbain to obtain the anonymisation of the press article about him. In 2013 the court of first instance granted most of the driver's claims. In 2014 the Court of Appeal upheld this judgment. Mr Hurbain then appealed on points of law, but his appeal was dismissed in 2016.

### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Relying on Article 10, Mr Hurbain complained that he had been ordered to anonymise the archived version of an article on his newspaper's website.

### **Decision of the Court**

#### **Article 10 (freedom of expression)**

The Court observed that the civil judgment against Mr Hurbain ordering him to anonymise the disputed article constituted an "interference" with his rights under Article 10 of the Convention.

It further noted that the interference was "prescribed by law". Belgian law recognised a right to be forgotten as an integral part of the right to respect for private life (Article 8 of the Convention, Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 22 of the Belgian Constitution, these being the main provisions relied upon by the Court of Appeal in recognising the driver's right to be forgotten). In addition, Article 1382 of the Civil Code served as a basis for civil actions for alleged abuses of the freedom of the press.

In addition, the interference pursued a legitimate aim within the meaning of Article 10 of the Convention, namely the protection of the reputation and rights of others (in this case, the right to respect for the private life of the driver concerned).

As to whether the interference had been necessary, the Court made the following points, among others. The Court of Appeal had rightly observed that the online article was of no value in terms of newsworthiness; 20 years after the events, the identity of a person who was not a public figure did not enhance the public interest of the disputed article, which merely contributed to a general debate on road safety at a statistical level. With the passage of time, a convicted offender might have an interest in no longer being confronted with his or her offence, to ensure reintegration into society.

As the Court of Appeal had stated, the electronic archiving of an article about the offence must not create a kind of "virtual criminal record" for the person concerned. This was particularly true where, as in the present case, the individual had served his or her sentence and had been rehabilitated.

The Court of Appeal had pointed out that the driver did not hold any public office. He was a private person unknown to the general public at the time of his request for anonymisation. The facts for which he was convicted had not been the subject of any media coverage, except for the article in question, and the case had not received any media attention either at the time of the accident or when the archived version was posted on the Internet. Furthermore, the driver had not at any time contacted the media to publicise his situation, neither when the article had been published in 1994 nor when it had been posted online in 2008. On the contrary, he had made every effort to stay out of the media spotlight.

Online communications and their content were far more likely than print publications to interfere with the exercise and enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms, in particular the right to respect for private life. Thus, the reproduction of material from the print media and of material from the Internet could be governed by different rules. The same applied to the difference between paper archives and digital archives. The scope of the latter was indeed much greater and the consequences for the private life of the named persons all the more serious, causing harm that was further amplified by search engines.

The Court took into account the fact that consulting archives required an active search by entering keywords on the newspaper's archive site. Owing to its location on the website, the disputed article was not likely to attract the attention of Internet users unless they were specifically looking for information about the driver. The Court did not call into question the purpose of giving access to the disputed article, which had not been to propagate information about the driver afresh. It noted, however, that at the time of the driver's request and throughout the domestic proceedings, the archives of the newspaper Le Soir had been available to all free of charge.

As regards the repercussions of the publication, the Court of Appeal had noted that a search on the newspaper's website or on Google, just by entering the individual's first name and surname, immediately brought up the article in question. That court had taken the view that to keep the article online could cause indefinite and serious harm to the driver's reputation. As already pointed out, it had given him a "virtual criminal record", whereas he had not only served his sentence after a final conviction but had also been rehabilitated. The Court took the view that the assessment of the Court of Appeal on this point had not been arbitrary or manifestly unreasonable. With the passage of time, a person should have the opportunity to rebuild his or her life without being confronted with errors of the past by members of the public. Online searches for people by name had become common practice in contemporary society and such searches usually had nothing to do with any criminal proceedings or convictions against the person concerned.

As to the seriousness of the measure imposed on the applicant, the Court of Appeal had found that the most effective way to ensure respect for the driver's private life, without disproportionately affecting Mr Hurbain's freedom of expression, would be to anonymise the article on the newspaper's website by replacing the individual's full name with the letter X.

The Court attached weight to the fact that the nature of the measure imposed had ensured the integrity of the original article, because only the online version would have to be anonymised. Mr Hurbain had been authorised to retain the original print and electronic archives. In other words anyone interested in the original article could still request access to it, even in electronic form. Thus the article itself had not been affected by the measure but merely its accessibility on the newspaper's website.

The Court thus found that the domestic courts had been entitled to conclude that the requirement of proportionality of the interference with Mr Hurbain's right to freedom of expression had been met. The courts had weighed up the driver's right to respect for his private life, on the one hand, and Mr Hurbain's freedom of expression, on the other, in accordance with the criteria laid down in the Court's case-law. In particular, the Court of Appeal had considered the harm sustained by the driver on account of the article being online, having regard to the passage of time (about 20 years) since its original publication and to the fact that its anonymisation on the website of Le Soir would not affect the text of the original article and would be the most effective and proportionate measure, among the various possible options.

The reasons given by the domestic courts had thus been relevant and sufficient, and the measure imposed on Mr Hurbain could be regarded as proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued and as striking a fair balance between the competing rights at stake. There had therefore been no violation of Article 10 in the present case. The Court explained that the conclusion it had reached in the present case could not be interpreted as entailing any obligation for the media to check their archives on a systematic and permanent basis. Without prejudice to their duty to respect private life at the time of the initial publication, when it came to the archiving of articles they would not be required to make such verification, and therefore to weigh up the various rights at stake, unless they received an express request to that effect.

**144. Eur. Court of HR, Hájovský v. Slovakia, judgment of 1 July 2021, application no 7796/16.**  
The case concerned a newspaper publication of private information and non-blurred photographs of the applicant taken covertly and under pretences. The Court undertook a balancing test concerning the applicant's right to private life and the defendant's right to freedom of expression and concluded that there had been a violation of Article 8.

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**No: 7796/16**  
**01/07/2021**

Information Note on the Court's case-law 253

### **Hájovský v. SLOVAKIA**

Newspaper publication of private information and non-blurred images of applicant taken covertly and under pretenses

#### **Facts**

After publishing an advertisement in a nationwide daily newspaper aimed at finding a surrogate mother, the applicant found himself the subject of a television report by an investigative reporter who had recorded her meetings with him covertly whilst pretending to be a potential surrogate mother. This was followed by the publication, in print and online, of an article entitled "Trade in unborn children", in a popular daily newspaper with national coverage. This described the applicant's story as depicted by the television report, contained information on his private matters as well as photographs of him from the report taken without his consent. Although, he successfully brought an action for the protection of his personal integrity against Slovak television, the one he brought against the newspaper's publisher was dismissed.

#### **Law**

The issue in the instant case was whether the domestic courts had ensured a fair balance between the protection of the applicant's private life and the defendant's right to freedom of expression. The Court thus reviewed, in the light of the case as a whole, whether the decisions taken by the domestic courts pursuant to their power of appreciation had been in conformity with the criteria laid down in its case-law. In particular, it examined the following applicable criteria:

#### **(a) How well-known was the applicant, the applicant's conduct prior to the publication of the article in question and the subject matter**

The domestic courts had considered, in particular, that by publishing the advertisement the applicant had decided to enter the public arena and should thus have had expected a greater amount of public attention, especially as his identity had already been revealed in the television report. However, the sole fact that, as an ordinary person, he had made use of an advertisement could not be an argument for reducing the protection that should have been afforded to him under Article 8. He had not been a public or newsworthy figure within the meaning of the Court's case-law, had not sought any public exposure beyond placing the advertisement – this had only revealed his readiness to have recourse to commercial surrogacy while promising confidentiality – nor could he have suspected that by talking to the person who had contacted him as a potential surrogate mother, he had run a risk of being recorded and having his intentions and identity revealed in the media. The assessment of the applicant's prior conduct had therefore been flawed.

As to the subject matter, the article had revealed some details of the applicant's private life. However, as it had also mentioned the involvement of (unnamed) doctors who were to have helped with the assisted reproduction and the falsification of documents, and the lack of legislation regulating that practice, the Court accepted the domestic courts' conclusion that it had been aimed at informing people about the controversial public-interest issue of surrogacy.

**(b) The content, form and consequences of the article**

The article contained some details about the applicant's background, his intentions and the content about his negotiations with the pretend surrogate mother. It conveyed a message of indignation about the fact that although trafficking of unborn children had been illegal in Slovakia, the applicant could not be punished for his action. The domestic courts had found that it did not contain any harsh or vulgar expressions intending to defame or create scandal about the applicant, and that the critical value judgments contained therein had relied on the information which, albeit insufficiently precise, had been true in substance. Although, the article had portrayed the applicant rather negatively and unfavourably, in the circumstances and in the light of the previous television report, this in itself did not give rise to a breach of his right to respect for his private life.

**(c) Contribution to a debate of general interest**

The definition of what constituted a subject of general interest depended on the circumstances of the case. In the instant case and assessing the publication as a whole, the article could be considered as having been written as part of a debate which had been likely to be of significant interest to the general public. Although it contained little about the phenomenon of surrogacy in general, it had been published two days after the broadcast of the television report which had, as per the Government, caused a "public storm" and had thus been closely linked in time to those events.

As regards, however, the potential contribution to a public-interest debate of publishing the applicant's photographs, nothing in the article or the case file materials substantiated any general interest reasons for the journalist's decision to include the photographs without taking any particular precautions, such as masking the applicant's face. Given that the applicant had not been known to the public (apart from the television report), there was nothing to suggest that the publication had had any inherent informative value or had been properly and adequately used. Nor had the domestic courts substantiated their conclusion that the publication of the photographs had been necessary for the purposes of news reporting within the meaning of Article 12 § 3 of the Civil Code by any relevant and convincing arguments. Hence, although the article addressed a matter of public interest, the method used for producing the article, notably the publication of large-size photographs of the applicant, could hardly be said to be capable of contributing to any debate on such a matter.

**(d) Circumstances in which the photographs were taken**

The Court reiterated that the task of imparting information necessarily included "duties and responsibilities", as well as limits which the press had to impose on itself spontaneously. In the present case, the domestic courts appeared to have had attached particular importance to the fact that the applicant's identity had already been revealed in the television report. Admittedly, this was a factor that might be considered in the balancing process and lead to the conclusion of no need to restrict the disclosure of an identity. The fact, however, that information was already in the public domain did not necessarily remove the protection of Article 8 of the Convention especially if the person concerned neither revealed the information nor consented to its disclosure. Thus, notwithstanding that the information in question had already been known to the public, a further dissemination of such "public

information” had still to be weighed against the applicant’s right to privacy; privacy was also about preventing intrusion.

It was undisputed but also clear from the television report that the reporter had contacted the applicant under pretences and that she had made the recordings with a hidden camera without the applicant being aware of it or having consented to it. The applicant had also not consented to the photographs’ publication. As the applicant could not have expected to be recorded or reported on in a public manner and had not voluntarily cooperated with the media, his reasonable expectations as to privacy were significant, although not necessarily conclusive, factor. Further, although it had been an established fact that the material concerning the applicant had been obtained illegally and broadcast in breach of the law, it had not been taken into account by the domestic courts. Nor had they assessed whether the journalist had acted in good faith, with necessary rigour and taking necessary precautions when disseminating material emanating from another source. The circumstances in which the photographs had been taken should have alerted the journalist and the newspaper’s publisher to the need to use that material with caution and not to disseminate it without masking or blurring the applicant’s face.

Bearing in mind the above, and more specifically, the flawed assessment of the applicant’s prior conduct, the failure to consider the manner in which the photographs had been taken and, most importantly, to assess the contribution to the public-interest debate of broadcasting non-blurred images of the applicant, the domestic courts had not exercised the balancing exercise between the competing rights in line with the Court’s case-law criteria. In these circumstances, and notwithstanding the margin of appreciation allowed to the domestic courts in this field, the State had failed to fulfil its positive obligations under Article 8 of the Convention.

**Conclusion: violation of Article 8 (unanimously)**

Article 41: finding of violation sufficient in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

**145. Eur. Court of HR, M.A. v. Denmark, judgment of 9 July 2021, application no 6697/18. The case concerned a delay of three years imposed in 2016 pursuant to Danish law on the applicant’s right to family reunification owing to his temporary protection status. The Court found in particular that, given the lack of an individualised assessment of the applicant’s case and the length of the wait to be able to avail of his right to family reunification, the authorities had failed to strike a fair balance between the needs of the applicant individually and the economic well-being of the country in their assessment of his application to be reunited with his wife.**

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**No: 6697/18  
09/07/2021**

Press release issued by the Registrar of the Court

**M.A. V. DENMARK**

Authorities violated Convention with mandatory waiting period for family reunification

**Principal facts**

The applicant, M.A., is a Syrian national who was born in 1959 and lives in Marstal (Denmark). The applicant fled Syria in January 2015 and requested asylum in Denmark in April of that year. His wife had remained in Syria. On 8 June 2015 the Immigration Service granted him “temporary protection status” (section 7(3) of the Aliens Act) for one year. That status was extended at yearly intervals. However, the

authorities did not find that he met the requirements for being granted protection status (section 7(2) of the Aliens Act). The applicant appealed against that decision to the Refugee Appeals Board. The Board upheld the decision not to grant him protection status, stating that the applicant had not been “subjected to specific and personal persecution during his stay in Damascus”. That decision was final.

In the meantime, in November 2015, the applicant requested family reunification with his wife. That request was rejected in 2016 as the applicant had not had a residence permit for the previous three years. That decision was upheld by the Immigration Appeals Board. The applicant went to court, complaining that the decision was in breach of his Convention rights. He also claimed that he was being discriminated against vis-à-vis people who had been granted protection. His action was dismissed at two levels of jurisdiction and then finally by the Supreme Court. The latter court stated, in extensive reasoning and with reference to European Court of Human Rights case-law, the following: “Moreover, it appears that the number of newcomers determines whether the subsequent integration becomes successful and that it is necessary to strike the right balance to maintain a good and safe society.

Against this background, the Supreme Court finds that the restriction on the eligibility for family reunification is justified by interests to be safeguarded under Article 8 of the Convention. ... the condition that [M.A.] must normally have been resident in Denmark for three years before he can be granted family reunification with his spouse falls within the margin of appreciation enjoyed by the State. ... the decision made by the Immigration Appeals Board is not contrary to Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.” On 22 October 2018 the applicant reapplied for family reunification. On 29 September 2019 the applicant’s wife came to Denmark having been granted a residence permit.

### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Relying on Articles 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and 14 (prohibition of discrimination), the applicant complained that the authorities’ decision to refuse to temporarily grant him family reunification with his wife on the grounds that he had not possessed a residence permit under section 7(3) of the Aliens Act for the previous three years had been in breach of his rights. The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 30 January 2018. On 7 September 2018 the Danish Government was given notice of the application, with questions from the Court. On 19 November 2019 the Chamber relinquished jurisdiction in favour of the Grand Chamber. A hearing was held on 10 June 2020. Third party submissions were received from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Governments of Norway and Switzerland, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights.

### **Decision of the Court**

#### **Article 8**

The Court noted from the outset that the applicant’s complaint related to his 4 November 2015 application for family reunification with his wife only. At that time he had had a residence permit under section 7(3) of the Aliens Act for five months. This case concerned thus the deferral for three years of the applicant’s right to be granted family reunification. The applicant did not however call into question that a waiting period of one year was “reasonable”. The Court also pointed out that it was the first time it had had to consider whether the imposition of a waiting period for granting family reunification to individuals who benefit from subsidiary or temporary protection status was Convention-complaint. The Court reiterated that a State was entitled to control the entry of aliens into its territory and their residence there. The Convention did not guarantee the right of a foreign national to enter or to live in a particular country. The Court also pointed out that the particular immigration status of the individuals requesting family reunification – in particular their rights as beneficiaries of subsidiary protection – and the temporary nature of any refusal owing to a statutory waiting period of a given length, had not been at

issue to date in its case-law. It concluded that States have wide discretion in this area, but that the processes set in place must be practical and effective. The core question for the Court was whether the Danish authorities had struck a fair balance between the competing interests of the individual and of the community as a whole. Under Danish law, applicants with “temporary protection status” (section 7(3) of the Aliens Act) had their right to family unification restricted, which was not the case for others who had been given protection by the State (under sections 7(1) or (2)). The Court saw no reason to question the distinction between these two categories. The Court stated that a waiting period of three years was a long time to be separated from family, and that that period did not include the actual decamping, meaning the period would inevitably be longer. This separation would disrupt family life. It accepted that there had been family life between the applicant and his wife. However, it noted that the applicant had not had deep ties with Denmark when he had made the application, having been in the State only for a matter of months. The Court observed that the sharp fall in the number of asylum seekers in 2016 and 2017 had not prompted Parliament to review the length of the waiting period. The Court did state that the authorities had not had access to case-law relevant to the situation at hand. The Supreme Court had “accepted” that the spouses had faced insurmountable obstacles to cohabiting in Syria, but it had emphasised that the obstacle to their exercise of family life together had only been temporary. It found that the three-year waiting period fell within the State’s discretion. The Court however found that the Aliens Act did not allow for individualised assessment of a particular family’s case. This had made the applicant’s wait for family reunification obligatory. Given this, and the length of the applicant’s marriage and the impossibility for him and his wife to live together in Syria, the Court found that the authorities had failed to strike a fair balance between the needs of the individual and the economic well-being of the country. There had accordingly been a violation of the Convention.

### **Other articles**

Given the finding under Article 8, the Court found no need to examine separately the applicant’s complaint under Article 14 read in conjunction with Article 8.

### **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held that Denmark was to pay the applicant 10,000 euros (EUR) in respect of nonpecuniary damage.

**146. Eur. Court of HR, Polat v. Austria, judgment of 20 July 2021, application no 12886/16. The case concerned a post-mortem examination of the applicant's son carried out against her will. The Court found in particular that the Austrian authorities had failed to balance the needs of science and the protection of public health against the applicant's rights in carrying out the post-mortem against her will and against her religious convictions, and examining the issue later in the courts. It also found that the failure to disclose to the applicant information regarding the extent of the examination given her specific circumstances had been a violation of her rights.**

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**No: 12886/16  
20/07/2021**

Press release issued by the Registrar of the Court

### **POLAT V. AUSTRIA**

Post-mortem examination of baby's body against mother's will led to violations of Article 8 ECHR

#### **Principal facts**

The applicant, Leyla Polat, is an Austrian national who was born in 1974 and lives in Bregenz (Austria). In 2006 the applicant became pregnant. Doctors indicated to her that the baby was likely to be born with a disability as a result of Prune-Belly syndrome. She gave birth prematurely on 3 April 2007. Her son, Y.M., died from a cerebral haemorrhage two days later.

Doctors asked the applicant and her husband for permission to carry out a post-mortem examination, in the interests of science. They refused, as they wanted to bury their child in accordance with their Muslim religious beliefs, which required the body to remain unscathed. The treating doctor told them that it would have to be carried out in any case in order to clarify the exact reasons for their son's death.

On 6 April 2007, the post-mortem examination was performed at the Feldkirch Regional Hospital. Practically all the internal organs were removed, along with the urinary tract, with the hollows filled with cotton wool. The boy's body was returned to his parents. The applicant asserted that they had not been informed of the extent of the examination and could not see it as the body had been clothed. Believing the body to be in the correct state for burial, the parents took it to Turkey for interment. During the funeral rites, the state of the body was discovered, leading to a disturbance among those performing the ceremonies and mourners. The boy had to be buried in another village without the religious ritual washing and Islamic ceremony, at additional cost to the parents.

Y.M.'s organs – after an initial denial by the hospital that they had been removed – were returned to the applicant some time later following several requests by her and an intervention by the regional patients ombudsman. She buried them in her son's grave in Turkey.

The applicant took a case against the hospital management company, seeking damages. The Feldkirch Regional Court allowed the initial claim, concluding that there had been no scientific interest in carrying out the post-mortem without the parents' consent in this case. However, the applicant lost on appeal and the Innsbruck Court of Appeal remitted the case.

In the second-round of proceedings expert testimony from medical professionals asserted that the post-mortem examination had been necessary to confirm the diagnosis of Prune-Belly syndrome or to clarify alterations in the belly, lungs and brain that had not been clearly identifiable, or to see the effect of the disease on the organs. It was noted that in the case of post-mortem examinations of fetuses or

deceased newborns, the removal and preservation of the organs was indispensable and therefore standard practice. Nevertheless, the first-instance court allowed the claim and awarded damages.

That judgment was overturned on appeal by the Innsbruck Court of Appeal. The hospital was awarded costs of almost 33,000 euros (EUR). The applicant lodged an appeal on points of law, relying on, among other law, Article 9 of the Convention and the Austrian Constitution, requesting a preliminary ruling from the European Court of Justice in the latter connection. The applicant was unsuccessful, with the Supreme Court ruling in 2015 that the post-mortem had been necessary scientifically and had been a legitimate restriction on freedom of religion. They saw the duty to disclose information as a rule to prevent future damage and to protect the patient, which had not been applicable in this case. It held that the specific religious background in the case could not change that assessment.

### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Relying on Articles 8 (right to respect for private and family life), 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) and 13 (right to an effective remedy), the applicant complained, in particular, that the post-mortem on her son had been carried out without her permission, that the domestic courts had not balanced the issues at play correctly, and that the hospital had failed to comply with its duty to inform her of the extent of the post-mortem and the removal of the inner organs of her deceased son. The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 29 February 2016.

### **Decision of the Court**

#### **Article 8 and 9 in relation to the post-mortem examination**

The Court reiterated that under the Convention there was no absolute right to object to a postmortem taking place. The post-mortem of Y.M. had been carried out in accordance with the law, namely on the basis of section 25 of the Hospital Act and section 12(3) of the Funeral Act. Under those provisions, a post-mortem examination could be carried out against the relatives' wishes in the interests of science and public health, in particular where there were diagnostic doubts. The Court was satisfied that there had been a legitimate interest in carrying out the examination.

However, the Court stated that the applicant's views had not been taken into account when that decision had been made, either by hospital staff or by the domestic courts. It noted in particular that the States ordinarily have a wide discretion in assessing the balance between private and public interests. Specifically with regard to post-mortem examinations against the will of the family, they had to be carried out with maximum respect for the family members' rights. The authorities had therefore failed to balance the competing interests involved, namely the State's obligation to protect public health and the applicant's rights under Articles 8 and 9.

The Court concluded that the decision to perform a post-mortem on the applicant's child against her will and against her religious convictions had been an interference with her "family life" and her right to manifest her religion which had not been justified, leading to violations of the Convention.

#### **Article 8 in relation to the duty to disclose information**

The applicant argued that she had not been told that a post-mortem examination would be performed, or the extent of that examination. The Court noted that there appeared to be no law in Austria regulating how much information had to be provided in circumstances such as the applicant's.

It also noted the delicacy of the situation: a mother, who had just lost her child, faced with a postmortem that she objected to, even though she had informed the authorities of the need to have the body as unscathed as possible for the funeral rites. Those specific circumstances had required a high degree of

diligence and prudence on the part of the hospital staff when interacting with the applicant. Even if there was some confusion as to exactly what had been said to the applicant, the Court adjudged that the authorities had not made clear to her the extent of the post-mortem.

Although the Supreme Court had held that not giving information regarding the removal of organs and so forth had been possibly less painful for relatives in such situations, the Court considered that the particularities of the applicant's case had meant that the hospital staff had had a duty to inform her of their removal. They also should have returned the organs to her, rather than keeping them for a considerable period, also since the applicant had pointed out the importance to bury them in her son's grave. In sum, not disclosing the information to the applicant had led to a violation of the Convention.

### **Other articles**

The Court found that it was not necessary to examine the complaints under Article 13.

### **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held that Austria was to pay the applicant EUR 10,000 euros (EUR) in respect of nonpecuniary damage and EUR 37,796.92 in respect of costs and expenses.

**147. *Eur Court of HR, Gumenyuk and others v. Ukraine*, judgment of 22 July 2021, application no 11423/19. The case concerned judges of the former Supreme Court of Ukraine who were prevented from exercising their functions, without having ever been formally dismissed, because of judicial reform and legislative amendments that took place in 2016. The Court found that the right of access to a court was a fundamental procedural right for the protection of members of the judiciary, and the applicants should, in principle, have been able to go to court with their allegations. In addition, the Court considered that being prevented from exercising as Supreme Court judges since December 2017, despite a Constitutional Court ruling in their favour, had significantly affected their private lives and constituted an interference with their right to respect for private life.**

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**No: 11423/19  
22/07/2021**

Press release issued by the Registrar of the Court

### **GUMENYUK AND OTHERS V. UKRAINE**

Reform in Ukraine seriously undermined the independence of the judiciary

### **Principal facts**

The applicants are eight Ukrainian nationals who were born between 1954 and 1963 and live in Kyiv. Between 1994 and 2008, the applicants were all elected to posts of judges of the Supreme Court of Ukraine for an indefinite length of time. Following the Maidan protests -- large anti-government demonstrations throughout Ukraine in late 2013 and early 2014 which resulted in the departure of the former President and a change of power in Ukraine, -- amendments to the Constitution of Ukraine regarding the organisation and functioning of the domestic judiciary were adopted by Parliament in June 2016. Simultaneously, a new law on the judiciary and the status of judges ("the Judiciary Act 2016") came into effect on 30 September 2016. The aim of the bill was to optimise the judicial system and to

introduce appropriate mechanisms for renewing judicial staff in Ukraine. The Supreme Court was to be the single supreme judicial authority, with powers of cassation, and whose judges were to be appointed on a competitive basis. The Judiciary Act 2016 provided that the judges of the former Supreme Court had the right to participate in the competition for the new Supreme Court.

On 3 October 2016 the plenary of the former Supreme Court challenged the provisions of the Judiciary Act 2016 before the Constitutional Court. It argued, among other things, that its liquidation, preventing judges from exercising their judicial functions, would be contrary to the Constitution. In November 2016 a competition for 120 judges' posts for the new Supreme Court was announced, and 846 candidates participated in it, including 17 of the 21 judges of the former Supreme Court. Seven of the eight applicants sat the competition but not one of them succeeded. The new Supreme Court began functioning on 15 December 2017.

On 18 February 2020, the Constitutional Court found that under the Constitution only one supreme judicial body existed. It also found, in view of the principle of irremovability, that the judges of the "old" Supreme Court should continue performing their functions as judges of the "new" Supreme Court. In June 2020, a draft law was introduced in Parliament proposing that the judges of the former Supreme Court be enrolled as judges in the new Supreme Court. As of June 2021, this law had not yet been adopted and the applicants had not been able to resume their duties as Supreme Court judges.

### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Relying on Article 6 § 1 (right of access to court), the applicants complained in particular that they could not challenge their being prevented from exercising their judicial functions as a result of the legislative amendments in 2016. Under Article 8 (right to private life), they complained that not being able to exercise their judicial functions as judges of the Supreme Court amounted to an unlawful and groundless interference with their right to respect for private life. The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 28 February 2019.

### **Decision of the Court**

#### **Article 8**

The Court recognised that the legislative amendments in 2016 and their subsequent implementation had prevented the applicants from exercising their judicial functions as Supreme Court judges without their being formally dismissed. They had been deprived of the opportunity to continue their judicial work and pursue professional and personal development goals. The Court considered that the measures had significantly affected the applicants' private lives, constituting an interference with their right to respect for private life. In this regard, the Court took note of the Constitutional Court's ruling of 18 February 2020 in which it declared that the relevant legislative measures had been unconstitutional. That court found that the judges of the former Supreme Court had to be able to continue to exercise their powers as judges of the new Supreme Court and that making a difference between judges was not consistent with the principle of irremovability of judges which was a constitutional guarantee of their independence. Despite that ruling, the issue of the applicants' resumption of their judicial functions was still under examination by Parliament as of June 2021. Moreover, since December 2017, when the Supreme Court had started to operate, the applicants had not been able to exercise their judicial functions as Supreme Court judges. Accordingly, there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

#### **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held that Ukraine was to pay each applicant 5,000 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage

**148. Eur. Court of HR, Särgava v. Estonia, judgment of 16 November 2021, application no 698/19. Violation of Article 8 due to the search of a lawyer's office, home and vehicle and the obtaining of information from his computer and telephone. The Court decided that the information retrieved from the computer and mobile phone was covered by the lawyer's professional secrecy and its seizure was in violation of Article 8.**

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**No:698/19  
16/11/2021**

Information note on the Court's case-law 256

### **Särgava v. Estonia**

Lack of sufficient procedural safeguards to protect privileged data covered during the seizure and subsequent examination of a lawyer's laptop and mobile telephone

#### **Principal Facts**

The laptop and mobile telephone of the applicant, a lawyer, were seized in his home and car and subsequently examined by the authorities within the framework of criminal proceedings. Appeals by the applicant, to declare unlawful the seizure and not to use material copied from the carriers as evidence in the criminal proceedings were unsuccessful.

The applicant, referring to legal professional privilege and the inviolability of data carriers related to the provision of legal services, complained that the seizure of his laptop and mobile telephone and their subsequent examination had violated his rights under Article 8 of the Convention.

#### **Article 8**

The seizure of the applicant's data carriers and their subsequent examination had constituted an interference with his right to respect for his correspondence. The Court left open the question whether domestic law met the requirements of clarity and foreseeability since in any event it did not provide sufficient procedural safeguards to prevent arbitrary or disproportionate interference with legal professional privilege.

Domestic law did not seem to contain any specific procedure or safeguards to address the examination of electronic data carriers and prevent communication covered by legal professional privilege from being compromised. The search warrant had not provided for safeguarding possible privileged material protected by professional secrecy. Moreover, the decision of whether to conduct a keyword-based search (or use any other method of sifting) as well as the choice of relevant keywords (some notably broad in scope) had been left entirely up to the investigative authorities. Domestic law had not granted the applicant any right to be present during the keyword-based search and did not seem to contain any specific rules on the procedure to be followed in the event of an objection to a seizure or content examination with reference to lawyer-client confidentiality.

The Court had no basis on which to decide whether or not lawyer-client confidentiality had actually been compromised in the case at hand. However, the lack of procedural guarantees relating specifically to the protection of legal professional privilege already fell short of the requirements flowing from the criterion that the interference must be "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of Article 8 § 2.

## Conclusion

Violation of Article 8, the right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence.

**149. Eur. Court of HR, Vasil Vasilev v. Bulgaria, judgment of 16 November 2021, application No 7610/15. The case concerns the interception, recording and transcription of a telephone conversation in 2010 between the applicant and one of his clients, a former Minister of Defence, who was being covertly monitored in connection with a criminal case. Mr Vasilev complained to the prosecuting authorities and brought a claim for damages, arguing that the conversation was covered by lawyer-client privilege and that its recording and transcript should have been destroyed.**

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**No:7610/15  
16/11/2021**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **VASIL VASILEV v. BULGARIA**

Lack of specific safeguards sufficient to justify the interception, recording and transcription of a telephone conversation between a lawyer and his client

## Principal Facts

The applicant, Vasil Tonchev Vasilev, is a Bulgarian national who was born in 1958 and lives in Sofia. He is a lawyer. Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private, family life and the home) of the European Convention on Human Rights, Mr Vasilev complains that the covert recording and transcription of the telephone conversation with his client was unlawful and unnecessary.

He argues in particular that Bulgarian law did not have sufficiently clear rules on the destruction of accidentally intercepted lawyer-client communications. Also relying on Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial) of the European Convention, he complains that the proceedings for damages were classified because the evidence admitted had been obtained via secret surveillance. The public was therefore excluded from hearings in the case and the ensuing judgments were not delivered publicly.

## Conclusion

### Violation of Article 8

**Violation of Article 6 § 1** owing to the exclusion of the public from the hearings in proceedings for damages brought by the applicant.

**Violation of Article 6 § 1** owing to the absence of publicity of the judgments given in the proceedings for damages brought by the applicant.

**150. Eur. Court of HR, Biancardi v. Italy, judgment of 25 November 2021, application no 77419/16. The case concerned the “right to be forgotten”. The applicant, a former editor-in-chief of an online newspaper, was found liable in civil proceedings for having kept on his newspaper’s website an article reporting on a fight in a restaurant, giving details on the related criminal proceedings. The courts noted in particular that the applicant had failed to**

de-index the tags to the article, meaning that anyone could type into a search engine the name of the restaurant or its owner and have access to sensitive information on the criminal proceedings, despite the owner's request to have the article removed. The Court shared the Government's point of view that not only Internet search engine providers could be obliged to de-index material but also administrators of newspaper or journalistic archives accessible through the Internet, such as the applicant. It also agreed with the domestic courts' rulings that the prolonged and easy access to information on the criminal proceedings concerning the restaurant owner had breached his right to reputation. The applicant's right to impart information under the Convention had not therefore been breached, and all the more so given that he had not actually been required to remove the article from the Internet. This was the first case in which the Court had examined whether a journalist's civil liability for not de-indexing information published on the Internet had been compatible with Article 10 of the Convention.

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No: 77419/16

25/11/2021

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **BIANCARDI V. ITALY**

Conviction of an editor under the right to be forgotten is not contrary to the Convention

#### **Principal facts**

The applicant, Alessandro Biancardi, is an Italian national who was born in 1972 and lives in Pescara (Italy). He was an editor-in-chief of an online newspaper. In March 2008 he published an article concerning a fight, involving a stabbing, in a restaurant. The article mentioned the names of those involved, namely the family – two brothers and their respective sons – who owned the restaurant. It also reported that the reason for the fight had probably been related to a financial quarrel over ownership of a building, and gave details about the family members' house arrest and/or detention.

In September 2010 one of the brothers and his restaurant sent a formal notice to the applicant asking that the article be removed from the Internet, to no avail. He therefore brought a claim in the domestic courts.

In January 2013 the district court ruled that there was no need examine the request for the article to be removed from the Internet, as the applicant had in the meantime de-indexed the article.

It found, however, that the easy access via the Internet to information on the criminal proceedings from March 2008 to May 2011, when the applicant had de-indexed the article, had breached the claimants' right to respect for his reputation. It noted in particular that the applicant's failure to deindex the tags to the article meant that anyone could access the sensitive data on the proceedings by simply inserting the plaintiffs' names in the search engine.

The Supreme Court upheld the first-instance decision on all grounds in June 2016.

#### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Mr Biancardi alleged that there had been a breach of his right to impart information under Article 10 (freedom of expression) and that the 5,000 euros he had been ordered to pay in compensation to each

claimant had been excessive. The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 7 December 2016.

### **Decision of the Court**

The Court pointed out that requiring the applicant to permanently remove the article had not been at issue in the domestic courts. The crux of the case was the applicant's failure to de-index the information concerning the restaurant owner and his decision to keep the article easily accessible. Nor had any intervention regarding the anonymisation of the online article been at issue in the case. From that starting point, the Court went on to note that the article had remained online and easily accessible for eight months, despite the claimant's request to remove it.

Furthermore, under the applicable domestic law, the applicant's right to disseminate information decreased over time, whereas the claimant's right to respect for his reputation increased.

Moreover, the information published, relating to criminal proceedings against a private individual, had been sensitive. Lastly, the Court did not consider that the severity of the sanction – civil not criminal liability – and the amount of compensation awarded had been excessive. It therefore concluded that the domestic jurisdictions findings had constituted a justifiable restriction on the applicant's freedom of expression – all the more so given the fact that he had not been obliged to permanently remove the article from the Internet.

Accordingly, there had been no violation of Article 10.

151. *Eur. Court of HR, Standard Verlagsgesellschaft mbH v. Austria (no. 3)*, judgment of 7 December 2021, application no. 39378/15. The case concerned court orders for the applicant media company to reveal the sign-up information or registered users who had posted comments on its website, derStandard.at, the website of the newspaper Der Standard. This had followed comments allegedly linking politicians to, among other things, corruption or neo-Nazis, which the applicant company had removed, albeit refusing to reveal the information of the commenters. The Court found in particular that user data did not enjoy the protection of “journalistic sources”, and there was no absolute right to online anonymity. However, the domestic courts had not even balanced the interests of the plaintiffs with the interests of the applicant company in keeping its users anonymous so as to help promote the free exchange of ideas and information as covered by Article 10. The Court found a violation of Article 10.

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No: 39378/15  
07/12/2021

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **STANDARD VERLAGSGESELLSCHAFT mbH V. AUSTRIA (no.3)**

Der Standard should not have been forced to reveal online commenters' personal information

#### **Principal facts**

The applicant, Standard Verlagsgesellschaft mbH is a limited liability company based in Vienna. It publishes Der Standard, a newspaper, and runs an online news portal carrying articles and discussion forums on derStandard.at.

When registering as a user on the website, which allows commenting on the articles, individuals had to provide their names and email addresses and optionally their postal addresses. The website made clear that this information would not be seen publicly and that the applicant company would only disclose it if required to do so by law. The discussion forums were partly moderated. Rules were set out for commenting and for moderation. According to the applicant company, it reviewed 6,000 comments per day, deleting many, and it provided user data when it was clear that rights had been infringed.

#### **Comments at issue**

In 2012 an article was published on the website concerning, among other things, K.S., who was at that time a leader of Die Freiheitlichen in Kärnten (FPK), a regional political party. More than 1,600 user comments followed, one of which read:

“Corrupt politician-assholes forget, [but] we don't. ELECTION DAY IS PAYDAY!!!!!!” (Korrupte PolitArschlöcher vergessen, wir nicht WAHLTAG IST ZAHLTAG!!!!!!).

Another read:

“[It was] to be expected that FPOe/K, ... ..-opponents would get carried away. [That would] not have happened if those parties had been banned for their ongoing Nazi revival.” (War zu erwarten, dass FPOe/K, ... -Gegner ueber die Straenge schlagen. Waere nicht passiert, wenn diese Parteien verboten worden waeren wegen ihrer dauernden Nazi-wiederbelebung).

K.S. and the FPK asked for the details of the commenters and the deletion of the comments. The applicant company deleted the comments but refused to reveal that information.

In 2013 an interview with H.K., a then member of the national assembly and general secretary of the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs – FPÖ) was published. The following comment was posted under the article:

“[I]f we did not perpetually misunderstand [the meaning of] freedom of expression and if undermining our constitution and destabilising our form of government were consequently to be made punishable – or at least, if [anti-mafia law] were for once to be applied to the extreme-right scene in Austria – then [H.K.] would be one of the greatest criminals in the Second Republic ...” (würden wir nicht ewig meinungsfreiheit falsch verstehen und wäre das sägen an der verfassung und das destabilisieren unserer staatsform konsequent unter strafe gestellt, oder wäre wenigstens der mafiaparagraf einmal angewendet worden auf die rechtsextreme scene in österreich, dann wäre [H.K.] einer der größten verbrecher der 2ten republik ...)

Again the applicant company deleted the comment but refused to disclose the user information.

### **Court proceedings**

K.S. and the FPK and H.K. initiated separate proceedings against the applicant company with a view to obtaining the user data of the comments’ authors in order to institute civil and criminal proceedings against them. In K.S.’s and the FPK’s case, the Supreme Court finally ordered the user details to be given to the plaintiffs, holding that as there had been no connection with journalistic activity, there had been no unlawful interference with the applicant company’s right to enjoy freedom of the press. The plaintiffs had demonstrated an overriding legal interest in the disclosure of the data. In H.K.’s case, the Supreme Court also ordered the release of the user data, giving much the same reasoning as in the former decision.

### **Decision of the Court**

The applicant company argued that the user data in question constituted journalistic sources and were thus protected by editorial confidentiality in the same way as were data of authors of readers’ letters published in a newspaper. It also argued that the Supreme Court had not considered the particular circumstances of the comments and not balanced the competing rights, as required by the Court’s case-law.

The Government argued that the applicant company’s role as a host provider offering a discussion forum on its website differed from its role as a publisher of articles. As a host provider, pursuant to the E-Commerce Act it had a duty to disclose certain data to individuals who credibly claimed an overriding legal interest.

The Court found that as the commenters had addressed the public and not a journalist, they could not be considered to have been journalistic “sources”. However, there was a link between the applicant company’s publication of articles and hosting comments on those articles on its news portal. According to the Court, the applicant company’s overall function was to further open discussion and to disseminate ideas with regard to topics of public interest, as protected by freedom of the press. The Court also considered that an obligation to reveal user information would have a chilling effect on contribution to debate. It reiterated that the Convention did not provide for an absolute right to online anonymity. However, anonymity had long been a means of avoiding reprisals or unwanted attention. As such, it was capable of promoting the free flow of opinions, ideas and information including, notably, on the

Internet. The Court observed that this anonymity would not be effective if the applicant company could not defend it by its own means. Its lifting had therefore interfered with the applicant company's right to freedom of the press. The Court held that that interference had had the legitimate aim of protecting the reputation of others and had been lawful.

The Court pointed out that the cases had not concerned the applicant company's own criminal or civil liability. It considered that the comments at issue had been neither hate speech nor incitement to violence, and had been about two politicians and a political party in a political debate of public interest. It had been the job of the domestic courts in this case to balance the competing interests: they had failed to do so, with the Supreme Court, in particular, giving no reasons as to why the plaintiffs' interests had outweighed those of the applicant company's in keeping its users' identities secret. The Court found that for a balancing exercise in proceedings concerning the disclosure of user data, a prima facie examination may suffice which would however require at least some reasoning and balancing.

The Court considered that the domestic courts had overall failed to balance the rights at issue and had failed to give sufficient reasons to justify the interference with the applicant company's rights. The court orders had thus not been "necessary in a democratic society", and there had therefore been a violation of Article 10 of the Convention.

**152. Eur. Court of HR, *Abdi Ibrahim v. Norway*, judgment of 10 December 2021, application no 15379/16.** The case concerned the decision by the Norwegian authorities to allow the adoption of a child by a foster family against his mother's wishes. The mother, a Somali national who had moved to Norway, did not ask for her son's return as he had spent a long time with his foster parents, but wished for him to maintain his cultural and religious roots. The Court decided to examine the applicant's wish to have her son brought up in line with her Muslim faith as an integral part of her complaint under Article 8, as interpreted and applied in the light of Article 9 (freedom of religion). Indeed, there had been shortcomings in the overall decision-making process leading to the adoption, which had not given sufficient weight to the mother and child's mutual interest in maintaining ties.

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**No: 15379/16  
10/12/2021**

Press release issued by the Registrar of the Court

#### **ABDI IBRAHIM V. NORWAY**

Child adoption without taking account of the mother's wishes breached her right to respect for family life

#### **Principal facts**

The applicant, Mariya Abdi Ibrahim, is a Somali national born in 1993. Her child, a son born in 2009 in Kenya before she moved to Norway, where she was granted refugee status, was taken into emergency foster care in late 2010. The parent-child centre where the applicant had initially been staying in order to be assisted in caring for her son had advised the welfare services that the child was at risk. He was subsequently placed with a Christian family, although the applicant had argued he should go to either her cousins or to a Somali or a Muslim family. As to contact arrangements, in 2010 mother and child were allowed to meet for two hours, four times per year. This regime was then changed to one hour, six times per year in 2011.

In 2013 the authorities applied to allow the foster family to adopt the child, which would lead to the applicant having no contact rights, and for the applicant's parental rights to be removed for that purpose.

She appealed: she did not ask for the child's return as he had spent a long time with his foster parents to whom he had become attached, but she sought contact so, among other things, he could maintain his cultural and religious roots.

The High Court ruled by a majority in May 2015 to dismiss the applicant's appeal and allow the adoption. The decision was largely based on the child's attachment to his foster home and his negative reaction to contact with the applicant. Moreover, her son was a vulnerable child in need of stability. Adoption would mean that the applicant would not be able to request her son's return in the future and would remove potential conflict between her and the foster parents. The court also examined issues arising from his being adopted by a Christian family, such as ethnicity, culture and religion. Between 2013 and the High Court's decision in 2015 the child and the applicant met twice.

The applicant was refused leave to appeal to the Supreme Court in September 2015.

### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 17 March 2016.

The applicant complained about the withdrawal of her parental rights and the authorisation for adoption, relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) and Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

In its Chamber judgment of 17 December 2019, the Court, deciding to consider the applicant's complaints under Article 8 of the European Convention alone, held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of that Article. On 11 May 2020 the Grand Chamber Panel accepted the applicant's request that the case be referred to the Grand Chamber. Before the Grand Chamber she argued in particular that, throughout her case, she had been vocal about her religious identity and her specific wishes for her son's upbringing. The adoption had severed all ties to her religion as the foster family had baptised the child.

She also argued that the Court should indicate to the Government measures to be taken under Article 46 (binding force and enforcement), such as reopening the adoption proceedings. A Grand Chamber hearing on the case was held in the Human Rights Building, Strasbourg, on 27 January 2021. The Governments of the Czech Republic, Denmark and Turkey, as well as the non-governmental organisation AIRE Centre and the child's adoptive parents were granted leave to intervene in the written proceedings as third parties.

### **Decision of the Court**

The principal reason behind the applicant's request to refer her case to the Grand Chamber was that, in the Chamber's decision, all her arguments had been examined under Article 8, rather than in part under Article 9. The Court considered, however, that the applicant's wish to have her son brought up in line with her Muslim faith could be examined as an integral part of her complaint under Article 8, as interpreted and applied in the light of Article 9. It was not necessary to examine separately any alleged failures to comply with Article 9.

The Court went on to note that finding a foster home which corresponded to the applicant's cultural and religious background had not been the only possibility for complying with the applicant's rights under Article 8, as interpreted in the light of Article 9. The domestic courts had taken various interests into account throughout the whole process, and in particular the applicant's son's psychological stability.

Moreover, there was a relatively broad agreement in international law that, in such cases, the authorities were not obliged to place a child in a family sharing his/her religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity or that of his/her parents, but that they did have an obligation to take those factors into account. In any case, the authorities had made efforts, although ultimately unsuccessful, to find a foster home culturally similar to the applicant but it had not been possible because of a shortage of foster parents from minority backgrounds.

However, the Court found that the contact arrangements after the applicant's son had been taken into care, culminating in the decision to allow adoption, had failed to take due account of her interest in allowing her son to retain at least some ties to his cultural and religious origins. Indeed, the overall decision-making process leading to the adoption had not been conducted in such a way as to ensure that all of the applicant's views and interests had duly been taken into account. In particular, the key issue in the High Court's decision had been the child's attachment to his foster home and his reaction to contact sessions with the applicant; yet the applicant had had very little contact with her son from the outset.

Furthermore, the High Court had focused on the potential harm of removing the child from his foster parents, rather than on the grounds for terminating all contact with his mother. The High Court had apparently given more importance to the foster parents' opposition to "open adoption", which would have allowed contact, than to the applicant's interest in continuing to have a family life with her child. Nor was the Court convinced by the High Court's emphasis on the need to pre-empt any future challenges by the applicant with regard to the care order or her visiting rights.

The Court therefore considered that it had not been shown that there had been such exceptional circumstances as to justify a complete and definitive severance of the ties between the child and the applicant, or that the overriding requirement behind that decision had been the child's best interests.

The Court was not satisfied that in depriving the applicant of her parental responsibility in respect of X and authorising his adoption by the foster parents, the domestic authorities had attached sufficient weight to the applicant's right to respect for family life, in particular to the mother and child's mutual interest in maintaining their family ties. There had accordingly been a violation of Article 8.

#### **Article 46 (binding force and enforcement)**

The Court decided not to indicate any measures, either individual or general, to the Norwegian Government. Individual measures could ultimately entail an interference with the child and his adoptive parent's current family life, and lead to new issues on the merits. As for general measures, the Court noted that the State was making efforts to implement the judgments against it concerning child welfare measures and was in the process of enacting new legislation to address any systemic issues.

#### **Article 41 (just satisfaction)**

The Court held, unanimously, that Norway was to pay the applicant 30,000 euros (EUR) in respect of costs and expenses. It dismissed, by 14 votes to three, the remainder of the applicant's claim for just satisfaction.

**153. Eur. Court of HR, *Ekimdzhiiev and Others v. Bulgaria*, judgment of 11 January 2022, application no. 70078/12. The case concerned secret surveillance and the system of retention and subsequent accessing of communications data in Bulgaria. The Court found a violation of Article 8 in respect of secret surveillance and a violation of Article 8 in respect of retention and accessing of communication data.**

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**No. 70078/12  
11/01/2022**

Press release issued by the Registrar

## **EKIMDZHIIEV AND OTHERS V. BULGARIA**

Flaws in legal safeguards and oversight procedures around secret surveillance

### **Principal facts**

The applicants are two Bulgarian nationals, Mihail Tiholov Ekimdzhiiev and Aleksandar Emilov Kashamov, who are lawyers, and two non-governmental organisations, the Association for European Integration and Human Rights and the Access to Information Foundation. Mr Ekimdzhiiev and Mr Kasamov were born in 1964 and 1971 and live in Plovdiv (Bulgaria) and Sofia respectively. The Association for European Integration and Human Rights was founded in 1998 and is based in Plovdiv. The Access to Information Foundation was founded in 1997 and is based in Sofia.

The applicants asserted that the nature of their activities put them at risk of both secret surveillance and of having their communications data accessed by the authorities under the laws authorising such activity in Bulgaria. They did not allege that they had in fact been placed under surveillance or had had their communications data accessed by the authorities.

Under the main relevant pieces of legislation (the Special Surveillance Means Act 1997 and Articles 172 to 176 of the Code of Criminal Procedure), covert surveillance is legal in Bulgaria. This includes, among other methods, visual surveillance, interception of telephone and electronic communications and eavesdropping. Surveillance techniques can be used for national security or when a “serious intentional offence” is suspected, that is to say an offence with a sentence of more than five years’ imprisonment. Examples included terrorism, murder, embezzlement, desertion in wartime and unlawfully dealing in nuclear materials. The most common offences for which they had been used are racketeering and drugs offences.

Surveillance information can be requested and used by bodies under the umbrella of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (such as the police), prosecutors and some other military and security agencies. The presidents of a limited list of courts can issue warrants to carry out the surveillance. The system is overseen mainly by a National Bureau and in addition by a special parliamentary committee.

Under the main relevant pieces of legislation (sections 251b and following of the Electronic Communications Act 2007 and Article 159a of the Code of Criminal Procedure), the retention and subsequent accessing by the authorities of communications data is likewise legal in Bulgaria. All communication service providers in the country are obliged by law to retain such data for all of their users for six months, and the authorities can access the retained data to detect and investigate serious crime and some other law-enforcement purposes. Access warrants can be issued by the presidents of all district courts or judges to whom they delegate that task. The system is overseen by a special parliamentary committee and, in part, by the personal-data-protection authorities.

## **Decision of the Court**

### **Secret surveillance**

The Court accepted that the relevant law was accessible to people such as the applicants in this case. The Court found it established that the grounds for surveillance set out in law met the Convention requirements, with the exception of the term “objects”, which was insufficiently clear within the meaning of section 12(1) of the Special Surveillance Means Act 1997. It found that there was a lack of proper judicial oversight over decisions to issue warrants. In terms of storing, accessing and destroying data, the Court found that the lack of clear regulation had led to a situation where secret surveillance data could be used for nefarious purposes. It highlighted that the protection for legal professional privilege was inadequate.

Regarding oversight by the authorities, the Court considered that the specific body’s (the National Bureau for Control of Special Means of Surveillance) independence could not be guaranteed, particularly as its members were given prior vetting by an agency whose requests they were meant to oversee, and they didn’t seem to be able to secure unfettered access to the relevant places and material. The system of overseeing secret surveillance in Bulgaria as it was currently organised did not appear capable of providing effective guarantees against abusive surveillance. The court noted that the restrictive notification procedures – often the only lawful way in which the people could learn that they had been subjected to surveillance – appeared inadequate, often not making clear, in response to requests, whether there had been no surveillance, rather than just no illegal surveillance. As for the remedy – a civil claim which was dependent on just such notification – it only led to damages and did not appear to be effective.

Ultimately, the Court held that the relevant legislation governing secret surveillance, especially as applied in practice, did not meet the quality-of-law requirement of the Convention and was unable to keep surveillance to only that which was necessary. There had been a violation of Article 8.

### **Retention and accessing of communication data**

Under this heading, the Court noted that the law was accessible, and that it provided that safeguards had to be put in place and data destroyed after a statutory period.

In terms of the process for accessing data, the Court noted that requests did not have to give supporting material, and the decisions themselves did not have to be reasoned. Overall, it did not effectively guarantee that access was granted only when genuinely necessary and proportionate in each case. The Court found that the oversight was too weak to ensure that the retention of communications data and its subsequent accessing was not open to abuse.

In terms of notification, the Government had not provided sufficient information on the new data protection procedures. In the absence of such information, the Court had to consider the notification procedure inadequate. The Court reiterated its above findings concerning the remedies available to the applicants or others in their situation. As the laws governing retention and accessing communications data did not meet the quality-of-law requirement of the Convention, they were incapable of limiting such retention and accessing to what was necessary, leading to a violation of Article 8.

**154. Eur. Court of HR, OOO Memo v. Russia, judgment of 15 March 2022, application no 2840/10. The case concerned a civil defamation suit brought by the Volgograd Region Authority against a media company which OOO Memo owned. The Court found in particular that although civil defamation proceedings were open to private or public companies to protect their reputation in the marketplace, this could not be the case for a large, taxpayer-funded, executive body like the plaintiff in this case. The proceedings and the consequent interference had therefore not had a “legitimate aim” under the Convention. The European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights.**

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**No: 2840/10  
15/03/2022**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **OOO MEMO V. RUSSIA**

#### **Principal facts**

The applicant, OOO Memo, is a Russian company. It is the owner of Kavkazskiy Uzel (*Кавказский узел* – “The Knot of the Caucasus”), a registered online media outlet which is devoted to the political and human-rights situation in the south of Russia, including Volgograd Region.

In July 2008 Kavkazskiy Uzel published an article in the context of the suspension of the transfer of 5,294,000 Russian roubles in subsidies from Volgograd Region to Volgograd City. It was entitled “[Mr S]: the Mayor’s Office of Volgograd fell out with the Volgograd Region Authority over a bus factory”. In October Volgograd Region commenced civil defamation proceedings against the applicant company and the editorial board of Kavkazskiy Uzel, seeking a retraction of the following statements:

(a) “... there are two main reasons for the financial conflict that stemmed from the order of the Volgograd Region Authority to suspend allocation of subsidies from the regional budget to the City of Volgograd. ... Undoubtedly, the first reason is a political one. It is linked to the [results] of the regional elections [of 2 March 2008]. The second reason is not widely known. It is of a purely economic character.”

(b) “Recently the Mayor’s Office held an open call for tender to buy buses ... Volgograd Region lobbied on behalf of Volzhanin’s to help it win the tender, but it was won by another company.”

(c) “The officials of the Authority heavily criticised the Mayor’s Office, saying, ‘How come you did not support the local producer!’ It appears to me that the Mayor’s Office’s refusal to do business with the Volzhanin factory was one of the main reasons of the regional officials’ anger.”

(d) “... the suspension of allocation of subsidies to the City of Volgograd from the regional budget was an act of revenge for the lost call for tender.”

The applicant company argued that the excerpts had been value judgments and that the plaintiff – a public body – should, in any case, expect a higher degree of criticism than a private individual. The first-instance court disagreed, holding that the statements were false and tarnished the Volgograd Region Authority’s reputation, and ordering that a retraction to that effect be published, with the operative part of the judgment being published on the company’s website. That judgment and the reasoning were upheld by the Moscow City Court on appeal.

A number of other applications are pending before the Court concerning civil defamation proceedings taken by State authorities in Russia.

### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Relying on Article 10 (freedom of expression), the applicant company complained of an interference with its right to freedom of expression. The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 24 December 2009.

### **Decision of the Court**

#### **Article 10**

The Court was satisfied that the Volgograd Region Authority – which had legal personality – had been entitled under the law to institute civil defamation proceedings.

Concerning whether the interference with the applicant company's right to free speech had pursued a "legitimate aim", the Court firstly noted that the Volgograd Region Authority is the executive authority of a constituent entity of the Russian Federation. For the Government, the legitimate aim had been "the protection of the reputation and rights of others". The applicant company argued that such an authority could not claim to have a "business reputation". Although protection of reputation was a right under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), the Court noted that an attack on reputation had to be serious enough to warrant protection under that Article. The Court pointed out that protection of a company's reputation – in the interests of shareholders, employees, and the economy – had also found protection in the Court's case-law.

Regarding public bodies, the Court highlighted that it had found that only in exceptional circumstances could a measure proscribing statements criticising the acts or omissions of an elected body be justified. State executive bodies were essentially different from State-owned companies or other legal entities, as the latter had to compete in the marketplace. Reputation was consequently important for them to attract and retain customers. Executive authorities, on the other hand, were funded by taxpayers. The Court reiterated that allowing State executive bodies to bring defamation proceedings against the media placed a disproportionate burden on the media.

In the current case, the Court held that there could not have been an interest in protecting the Volgograd Region Authority's commercial success which would have potentially justified the legal action; nor were the employees of the organisation harmed by the allegations. The defamation proceedings had thus not pursued a legitimate aim, leading to a violation of Article 10 of the Convention.

#### **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The applicant company did not make any claims for just satisfaction.

**155. Eur. Court of HR, C.E. and Others v. France, judgment of 24 March 2022, application nos. 29775/18 and 29693/19. The judgment concerned two cases. The first related to the rejection by the domestic courts of an application for full adoption of a child, made by the biological mother’s former partner. The second concerned the domestic courts’ refusal to issue a document attesting to a matter of common knowledge (acte de notoriété) recognising a legal parent-child relationship, on the basis of de facto enjoyment of status (possession d’état), between a child and the biological mother’s former partner. The European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been: no violation of Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights.**

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**Nos: 29775/18 and 29693/19  
24/03/2022**

Press release issued by the Registrar of the Court

**C.E. AND OTHERS V. FRANCE**

Refusal to recognise a legal relationship between a child and the biological mother’s ex-partner: no violation of Article 8 of the Convention

**Principal facts**

The applicants C.E., C.B. and M.B. (application no. 29775/18) were born in 1974, 1967 and 2002 respectively. The applicants A.E. and T.G. (application no. 29693/19) were born in 1980 and 2008 respectively. All the applicants live in France. Application no. 29775/18 – On 13 January 2002, at a time when C.E. and C.B. were living as a couple, C.B. gave birth to M.B., who had been conceived “with the help of a friend and donor in France”. C.B. was the child’s sole legal parent.

The couple separated in 2006. Under an agreement reached with C.B., C.E. has contact rights with the child which entail having her to stay every other weekend and for half the school holidays. C.E. makes monthly maintenance payments to her former partner for the child’s everyday care and education.

On 29 July 2015 C.E. lodged an application with the Aix-en-Provence tribunal de grande instance for a full adoption order in respect of M.B. while retaining the legal relationship between the child and C.B. The court rejected the application and the judgment was upheld by the Court of Appeal. In a judgment of 28 February 2018 the Court of Cassation (First Civil Division) dismissed an appeal on points of law by C.E. In the meantime, on 31 May 2016, C.E. and C.B. had applied to the Narbonne tribunal d’instance requesting a document attesting to a matter of common knowledge (acte de notoriété) establishing a legal relationship between C.E. and the child. The request was eventually refused.

Application no. 29693/19 – In May 2006 A.E. entered into a civil partnership with K.G. After having recourse to assisted reproductive technology (ART) abroad, K.G. gave birth to T.G. on 13 November 2008. On 16 March 2010 K.G. applied to the family-affairs judge of the Rennes tribunal de grande instance seeking to exercise joint parental responsibility with A.E. The judge allowed the application. In October 2011 A.E. gave birth to a child. In May 2012 the same court ordered the delegation of parental responsibility on a shared basis between A.E. and K.G. Following the couple’s separation the civil partnership was dissolved in October 2014.

On 2 July 2018 A.E. applied to the Rennes tribunal de grande instance requesting it to issue a document attesting to a matter of common knowledge on the basis of de facto enjoyment of status (possession

d'état) with regard to T.G. K.G. intervened in the proceedings as a third party. The vicepresident of the court refused the request.

### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), C.E., M.B. and C.B (application no. 29775/18) alleged a breach of their right to respect for their private and family life on account of the domestic courts' rejection of the application for full adoption of M.B. by C.E., the former partner of C.B., the child's biological mother. In application no. 29693/19 A.E., the former partner of T.G.'s biological mother, and T.G., alleged a breach of the latter's right to respect for private and family life on account of the domestic courts' refusal to issue a document attesting to a matter of common knowledge, establishing a legal relationship between A.E. and T.G. on the basis of their de facto enjoyment of status.

The applications were lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 20 June 2018 and on 3 June 2019.

### **Decision of the Court**

#### **Article 8**

The Court noted that at the time the applicants applied to the domestic courts and the Court, French law had made no provision for a legal parent-child relationship to be established between a minor and the former partner of his or her biological mother without the latter's legal status being affected. The persons concerned could not have recourse to full or simple adoption or to recognition through the effect of their de facto enjoyment of status. The Court observed that in neither case did the Article 8 complaints allege a breach of the applicants' right to respect for private and family life by a public authority. Instead, they related to alleged shortcomings in the French legislation which, according to the applicants, had resulted in the refusal of their requests and undermined effective respect for their private and family life. The Court therefore decided to examine the applicants' complaints from the standpoint of the States Parties' positive obligation to secure to persons within their jurisdiction effective respect for their private and family life, rather than from the perspective of their obligation not to interfere with the exercise of that right.

#### **Right to respect for family life**

The Court noted that in both cases, since the couples' separation, and despite the lack of legal recognition of a relationship between the children and their biological mother's former partner, the persons concerned had led a family life comparable to that led by most families after the parents separated. C.E., in agreement with her former partner, exercised contact rights in respect of M.B., while K.G. and A.E. had opted for joint parental responsibility, in accordance with domestic law, and had put shared custody arrangements in place. Furthermore, none of the applicants in either case had reported any difficulties in conducting their family life, and the respondent State had put in place legal instruments enabling the ties between them to be protected. If any problems were to arise they could be remedied on the basis of Article 371-4 of the Civil Code, according to which "if the interests of the child so require, the family-affairs judge shall determine the arrangements concerning the relationship between the child and any other person, whether a relative or not, who has resided in a stable manner with the child and one of the parents, has participated in the child's education, everyday care or accommodation and has developed lasting emotional bonds with him or her." Thus, there was no basis for finding, in the circumstances of the two cases, that the respondent State had failed in its obligation to guarantee the applicants effective respect for their family life. There had therefore been no violation of the right to respect for family life protected by Article 8.

## Right to respect for private life

As noted by the Court, at the time the applicants applied to the domestic courts and the Court, French law had made no provision for a legal parent-child relationship to be established between a minor and the former partner of his or her biological mother without the latter's legal status being affected. It therefore had to be determined whether, in the circumstances of the present cases, the absence of such a possibility amounted to a failure by the respondent State to comply with its positive obligation to guarantee the applicants effective respect for their private life. The Court pointed out that it had held, in the context of children born abroad through a gestational surrogacy arrangement and conceived using the gametes of the intended father, that the child's right to respect for private life required that domestic law provide a possibility of recognition of a legal parent-child relationship not only between the child and the intended father, where he was the biological father, but also, where the legal parent-child relationship with the intended father was recognised in domestic law, with the intended mother, designated in the birth certificate legally established abroad as the "legal mother", even where she was not genetically related to the child. The Court noted that the situations of M.B. and T.G. could not be compared to such a situation as they had not been conceived through gestational surrogacy and their ties to C.E. and A.E. respectively had not previously been established under the law of another country. Firstly, the Court stressed that in situations such as those of the applicants there existed legal instruments in France enabling the relationship between a child and an adult to be recognised. For instance, the child's biological mother could obtain a court order for the exercise of joint parental responsibility with her partner or former partner. While an order of that kind did not entail the establishment of a legal parent-child relationship, it nevertheless allowed the partner or former partner to exercise certain rights and duties associated with parenthood and thus amounted to a degree of legal recognition of the relationship.

T.G.'s biological mother had availed herself of that option, and she and A.E. had exercised joint parental responsibility with regard to T.G. since 2010. While this was not the case with C.E. and C.B., the Court observed that it had not been alleged that C.B. would object to sharing parental responsibility in this way; moreover, this would be inconsistent with the fact that she had agreed to M.B.'s adoption by C.E. Furthermore, where former partners separated or failed to reach agreement, the Court noted that the family-affairs judge could, if the child's interests so required, determine the arrangements concerning his or her relationship with the mother's former partner (Article 371-4 of the Civil Code). This too could be likened to some extent to legal recognition of their relationship. Secondly, the Court noted that since publication of the Bioethics Act of 2 August 2021, female couples who had had recourse to ART abroad before 4 August 2021 had the possibility, for a three-year period, of jointly recognising a child who had a legal parent-child relationship only with the woman who had given birth; this had the effect of establishing a legal relationship with the other woman. The couple's possible subsequent separation had no implications for the application of this mechanism. It was sufficient for them to have been a couple (married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting) at the time of the ART treatment, and for them to have had recourse to that treatment with the intention of having a child together.

The Court noted that this option was available in the case of T.G., since he had been born as a result of an ART procedure carried out abroad in the context of the plans of K.G., his biological mother, and A.E. to start a family together. Since 4 August 2021 (when T.G. had been approximately 12 years and eight months old), a procedure had existed in French law enabling a legal parent-child relationship to be established between T.G. and A.E. That option had thus become available just three years after their application for a document attesting to a matter of common knowledge.

Thirdly, although under the legislation this procedure was not available in the case of M.B., who had not been conceived through an ART procedure performed abroad, it appeared that her adoption by C.E. under the simple adoption procedure would now be possible. While that had not been the case when she had still been a minor, as her biological mother would have been deprived of parental responsibility

as a result, M.B. had reached the age of majority on 13 January 2020 and a procedure had therefore been available since then enabling a legal mother-child relationship to be established with C.E.

In view of the margin of appreciation left to the respondent State – which, admittedly, was narrower where children’s best interests were in issue – the Court considered, with regard to M.B. and T.G.’s right to respect for private life, that a fair balance had been struck between the interests at stake. This applied with even greater force to the right to respect for private life of C.E. and C.B. on the one hand and A.E. and K.G. on the other, as their interests in that regard coincided with those of M.B. and T.G. respectively. The Court therefore held that the respondent State had not failed in its obligation to guarantee effective respect for the applicants’ private life. It followed that there had been no violation of Article 8.

**156. Eur. Court of HR, Nuh Uzun v. Turkey, judgment of 29 May 2022, application no 49341/18.** The case mainly concerned the uploading of the applicants’ correspondence, while they were in detention, onto the National Judicial Network Server (Ulusal Yargı Ağı Bilişim Sistemi – “UYAP”). The Court found that the uploading of the correspondence of remand and convicted prisoners onto the UYAP server stemmed directly and specifically from an instruction issued by the Ministry of Justice on 10 October 2016 and reissued on 1 March 2017. It noted that the instruction had been addressed to the public prosecutors and prison authorities. The documents in question were therefore unpublished internal documents which as a matter of principle did not have binding force. In the Court’s view, texts of this kind, which were not issued under any rule-making powers, could not be regarded as “law” of sufficient “quality” for the purposes of the Court’s case-law. Consequently, the interference with the applicants’ right to respect for their private life and correspondence could not be said to have been “in accordance with the law” within the meaning of Article 8 of the Convention.

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**No: 49341/18**  
**29/05/2022**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **NUH UZUN V. TURKEY**

The uploading of prisoners' correspondence to a judicial IT server while in custody is in violation to Article 8 of the Convention

#### **Principal facts**

At the time of the events the applicants (fourteen Turkish nationals) were detained in various Turkish prisons in connection with alleged membership of a terrorist organisation, following the attempted military coup of 15 July 2016. Some of them were subsequently released while others are still in detention.

While in detention, the applicants applied to the competent judicial authorities seeking an end to the practice of monitoring and/or systematically uploading their correspondence – both incoming and outgoing – onto the National Judicial Network Server (Ulusal Yargı Ağı Bilişim Sistemi – “UYAP”). The authorities to which they applied (enforcement judges and assize courts) dismissed their claims, taking the view that the practice in question was compatible with the procedure and the law.

The Constitutional Court subsequently rejected the individual applications lodged by the applicants.

## **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

All the applicants relied on Article 8 of the Convention (right to respect for private life/right to respect for correspondence).

### **Decision of the Court**

#### **Article 8 (right to respect for private life and correspondence)**

The Court considered that the applicants' private correspondence was liable to contain personal information falling within the scope of protection of their private life.

In the Court's view, the fact that this private correspondence had been scanned and uploaded onto the UYAP server did indeed constitute interference with the applicants' right to respect for their private life and their correspondence. Where personal data in particular were concerned it was essential to have clear, detailed rules governing the scope and application of such measures, together with minimum safeguards aimed at preserving the integrity and confidentiality of data and procedures for their destruction, in order to provide the persons concerned with sufficient guarantees. In that connection the Court noted that the parties disagreed as to the existence of a legal basis for the interference in question.

The Court observed that at the relevant time the monitoring of the correspondence of remand and convicted prisoners had been provided for by section 68 of Law no. 5275 and regulations 122 and 123 of the Regulations of 20 March 2006. Neither those provisions as in force at the relevant time, nor any other legislative or administrative provision, contained any reference to the scanning or uploading of prisoners' correspondence onto the UYAP server.

It also noted that the uploading of prisoners' correspondence onto the server stemmed directly and specifically from an instruction issued by the Ministry of Justice on 10 October 2016 and reissued on 1 March 2017. According to the instruction, "with the exception of faxes and letters in sealed envelopes sent by remand and convicted prisoners to their lawyers for defence purposes or for submission to the authorities (in the context of the procedures and principles provided for in the legislative decrees), all letters, faxes and requests which prisoners – in particular those detained in connection with terrorist offences or organised crime – wish to send, or which are sent to them, must be scanned and uploaded onto the UYAP server."

The Government contended that the documents in question were to be regarded as circulars issued by the Ministry of Justice, and thus sufficed to demonstrate that the interference in question had been in accordance with the law. However, the Court noted that they had been addressed to the public prosecutors and prison authorities. It observed that there was nothing in the case file or in the Government's submissions to suggest that the letter of 10 October 2016, sent out again on 1 March 2017, had been made accessible to the public in general or to the applicants in particular.

In the Court's view, the documents of 10 October 2016 and 1 March 2017 had thus been internal unpublished documents containing instructions from the Ministry of Justice to prisons. As a matter of principle, they did not have binding force. Thus, texts of this kind, which were not issued under any rule-making powers, could not be regarded as "law" of sufficient "quality" for the purposes of the Court's case-law, capable of affording adequate legal protection and the legal certainty necessary to prevent arbitrary interference by public authorities with the rights guaranteed by the Convention. Hence, the interference complained of could not be said to have been "in accordance with the law" within the meaning of Article 8 of the Convention. There had therefore been a violation of that provision.

## **Article 6 (right to a fair trial)**

Seven of the applicants complained of a lack of fairness in the proceedings before the domestic authorities (enforcement judge and/or assize court) on account of the non-disclosure of the public prosecutor's opinion. The Court noted, in particular, that the public prosecutors' opinions in the proceedings before the assize courts had been confined to stating that the contested decisions of the enforcement judges were compatible with the procedure and the law. It also observed that the applicants had not demonstrated that they could have adduced any new evidence of relevance for the consideration of their cases in reply to the public prosecutors' opinions. This complaint was therefore inadmissible under Article 35 §§ 3 (b) and 4 of the Convention for lack of significant disadvantage.

## **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held, by a majority (6 votes to 1), that the finding of a violation constituted in itself sufficient just satisfaction in respect of the non-pecuniary damage sustained by the applicants. The Court also held, unanimously, that Turkey was to pay six of the applicants 500 euros (EUR) each in respect of costs and exp

**157. Eur. Court of HR, Algirdas Butkevicius v. Lithuania, judgment of 14 June 2022, application No 70489/17. The case concerned a telephone conversation between Mr Butkevicius and a mayor that was secretly recorded during a pre-trial investigation into possible corruption in connection with territorial planning and was made public at a hearing of the Seimas's (the Lithuanian Parliament's) Anti-Corruption Commission. At the time, Mr Butkevicius was the Prime Minister of Lithuania. The Court found that, even if Mr Butkevicius's reputation had been affected by the disclosure of his telephone conversation, there was no evidence that it had been affected to such an extent that it could count as a disproportionate interference with his rights guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention.**

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**No: 70489/17  
14/06/2022**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **ALGIRDAS BUTKEVICIUS v. LITHUANIA**

Recording and disclosing a telephone conversation of a Prime Minister is not an invasion of privacy if the conversation is in the public interest

## **Principal facts**

The applicant, Algirdas Butkevicius, is a Lithuanian national who was born in 1958 and lives in Vilnius (Lithuania).

In 2015 a regional prosecutor's office and the Special Investigations Service were looking into allegations of corruption relating to the process whereby some State territories were to have their status as resorts – and thus protected territories – revoked by a government resolution. During the pre-trial investigation, a court authorised the recording of the telephone conversations of the mayor of one of the resort towns. One of his intercepted conversations took place in August with Mr Butkevicius, the then Prime Minister of Lithuania, when they briefly discussed the planned adoption of the government

resolution; others were with Ministers and other State officials. Government Resolution no. 1025 was adopted on 23 September 2015.

Seven weeks later, the Seimas, considering that the correct procedures might not have been followed, instructed its Anti-Corruption Commission to conduct a parliamentary inquiry into the circumstances in which Resolution no. 1025 had been adopted. In February 2016, the pre-trial investigation into possible political corruption was discontinued on the basis that no crime had been committed. The prosecutor informed the commission and sent it the investigation material, but did not specify that it should not be disclosed further.

On 1 March 2016 the Seimas Anti-Corruption Commission held a hearing which was open to the public, during which the commission discussed the pre-trial investigation material. Some 20 journalists were present. That evening an article published by one of them contained extracts from the transcript of the telephone conversation between Mr Butkevičius and the mayor of the resort town. The article suggested that “nearly half of the Government, including the Prime Minister, were dancing to the music played by the mayor.” That information was republished by the biggest news portals in the country, as well as aired on television channels.

The following day, Mr Butkevičius lodged a complaint with the Prosecutor General, as did the Minister of the Environment later that week. Mr Butkevičius maintained that, under Lithuanian law, there were strict regulations for the use of pre-trial investigation material, and the unlawful disclosure of such material was punishable. Information collected through criminal-intelligence measures had to be destroyed once the investigation was over. He considered that the telephone conversations had been made public for political gain – to harm him as a person, the Social Democrats Party and the Government.

The prosecutor rejected the complaints, relying on the fact that all the persons – the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Environment, and the mayor of the resort town –, had been public figures and that the professional activities of State and municipal officials were always considered to be public in nature. There had been no reason to organise the commission’s hearing as a non-public hearing. Moreover, in sending a copy of the decision to the Anti-Corruption Commission, and in not warning it that the data from the pre-trial investigation file was not to be made public, the prosecutor had not breached the requirements applicable to criminal proceedings and no crime had been committed.

An appeal lodged by Mr Butkevičius was dismissed by the Vilnius City District Court and the Vilnius Regional Court on the ground that, as nothing relating to his private life had been discussed in the conversation, the publication of the transcript could not have infringed his right to respect for his private life. Due to his position as Prime Minister, his work-related activity and his participation in public life, he was a prominent public figure, and the pre-trial investigation and the telephone conversation had concerned a matter of public interest – allegations of corruption in territorial planning. The district courts also found that the members of the Seimas Anti-Corruption Commission had neither been warned not to disclose material from the pre-trial investigation file, nor about their possible criminal liability.

### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), the applicant complained that the State authorities had breached his right to private life and correspondence by disclosing the telephone conversation to the media. He contended that the State authorities – the prosecutor and the Anti-Corruption Commission – had not properly protected that information as they had been required to by law.

The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 19 September 2017.

## Decision of the Court

The Court reiterated that professional life, even in a public context, could sometimes fall within the scope of private life. However, it gave weight to the fact that, when examining Mr Butkevičius's complaint, the domestic court had referred to the Court's case-law on the protection of private life, and had carefully balanced the competing interests, namely his reputation and honour on the one hand, and the right of the press to report on matters of public interest on the other. It also took into account that the prosecutor, considering that the material gathered during the pre-trial investigation had elements demonstrating possible breaches of other laws, had sent a copy of his decision to the Chief Official Ethics Commission.

The Court took note of the Lithuanian authorities' conclusion that in transferring the material to the Anti-Corruption Commission and in not warning it that the material should not be disclosed, the prosecutor had not breached the rules of criminal proceedings. Seeing no reason to depart from that conclusion, the Court rejected Mr Butkevičius's argument that the information gathered during the pre-trial investigation had not been protected by the prosecutor, and it noted the Constitutional Court's practice of considering that the activities of State and municipal officials linked to their functions were always of a public nature.

The Court acknowledged Mr Butkevičius's argument that the release into the public domain of his telephone conversation had had an impact on his reputation. It went without saying that reputation-related criteria played an important role in a politician's life. Be that as it may, he had not pointed to any concrete and tangible repercussions which the media's disclosure of the telephone conversation had had on his private life, all the more so as he had not been convicted of anything and the Chief Official Ethics Commission had established nothing untoward in the conversation.

The Court has already referred to the importance of public scrutiny in cases of possible political corruption. It found that even if Mr Butkevičius's reputation among his colleagues had been dented by the disclosure of his telephone conversation, there were no factual grounds, let alone evidence, to indicate that it had been affected to a disproportionate degree.

There had therefore been no violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**158. Eur Court of HR, Haščák v. Slovakia, judgment of 23 June 2022, application nos: 58359/12, 27787/16 and 67667/16. The case concerned a surveillance operation (“the Gorilla operation”) carried out in 2005 and 2006 by the Slovak Intelligence Service and the intelligence material obtained by it. The Court, citing its findings in substantially the same situation of the applicant in Zoltán Varga v. Slovakia, highlighted the deficiencies in the applicable rules and procedures and the lack of external oversight of both the SIS operation and the retention by the SIS of some of the resulting data, and found that both had thus not been in accordance with the law for the Convention purposes.**

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**Application nos: 58359/12, 27787/16 and 67667/16  
23/06/2022**

Press release issued by the Registrar of the Court

***Haščák v. Slovakia***

Secret surveillance “Gorilla operation” was not in accordance with the law

**Principal facts**

The applicant is a Slovak national who was born in 1969 and lives in Bratislava. He is a prominent businessman associated with an influential finance group and a business partner of the applicant in the case of Zoltán Varga v. Slovakia (nos. 58361/12 and 2 others). Two surveillance warrants were issued by the Bratislava Regional Court in the mid-2000s, which had the aim of monitoring by the Slovak Intelligence Service (SIS) of Zoltán Varga and one other person. Mr Haščák submits that the other person was him. The warrants allowed the bugging of Mr Varga’s flat – the so-called “Gorilla operation” – resulting in, among other things, audio recordings and transcribed analytical summaries of the activity there. The domestic authorities understood that the audio recording had been destroyed by the SIS in 2008. The summaries were archived by the agency with no one but a court having access.

In 2012 the Constitutional Court ruled on a complaint by Mr Varga, effectively annulling the warrants in so far as they concerned him, finding them to have been unjustified and unlawful and a violation of his fundamental rights. Meanwhile, in 2011, material was anonymously published on the Internet purporting to be an SIS analytical summary of the operation, describing Mr Haščák discussing with others massive corruption in the privatisation of State-owned companies.

In 2018 in the course of an unrelated murder investigation, an audio recording was found, with the Public Prosecution Service making observations in 2021 which may be read as indicating that it was in fact the recording made by the SIS in the course of the Gorilla operation.

In response to the 2012 constitutional judgment of Mr Varga, the applicant attempted numerous legal avenues before judicial, executive as well as parliamentary authorities, among others to have the surveillance material destroyed.

In connection with these matters, a number of investigations were pursued, including suspected corruption (the “Gorilla investigation”). Mr Haščák argues that this investigation has focussed on him, notably given the number of times he has been interviewed in that connection, and related official comment on the matter, but no charge has been forthcoming.

## **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Relying on Articles 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing within a reasonable time), 6 § 2 (presumption of innocence) and 8 (right to respect for private and family life/right to respect for correspondence), the applicant complained, in particular, that there had been a lack of effective supervision and review of the implementation of the two surveillance warrants, that the applicable framework provided no protection to individuals randomly affected by surveillance measures, and that the internal rules applicable to the retention of intelligence material were inadequate. The three applications constituting this case were lodged with the European Court of Human Rights between 6 September 2012 and 11 November 2016.

## **Decision of the Court**

### **Article 8**

As to the scope of the case, the Court noted that it involved no complaint of any leak of information by the SIS and no complaint concerning the practical and procedural status of the audio recording retrieved by the investigators in 2018. The Court stated that to a significant extent, Mr Haščák's Article 8 complaints are identical and arise from an identical factual and procedural background to that examined in *Zoltán Varga*.

The Court therefore applied that case-law to the present case. While there had been a basis in law, the operation had had numerous deficiencies, some of which had been recognised at the domestic level in response to complaints and actions of Mr Varga. Although the domestic courts made no such findings in the individual case of Mr Haščák, they were relevant to the assessment of his case.

The Court reiterated that, as in *Zoltán Varga*, when implementing the surveillance warrants the SIS had practically enjoyed discretion amounting to unfettered power, which had not been accompanied by a measure of protection against arbitrary interference, as required by the rule of law.

Furthermore, that situation had been aggravated by the uncontested fact that Mr Haščák had not himself been the target of the surveillance under the first of the two warrants, in the light of his unchallenged argument that the law provided no protection to persons randomly affected by surveillance measures, and by the fundamental uncertainty around the practical and procedural status of the audio recording retrieved in 2018, presumably of SIS provenance.

The Court had previously held in *Zoltán Varga* that the storing of the analytical material obtained in the surveillance operation had been subject to confidential rules with no external oversight. The retention had therefore not been in accordance with the law.

The Court ruled that that also applied in the present case. The implementation of the two warrants and the retention of the analytical material had thus been in violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

**159. Eur. Court of HR, Naumenko and Sia Rix Shipping v. Latvia, judgment of 23 June 2022, application No 50805/14. A search of an applicant's business premises and the seizure of a large quantity of documents and electronic files during an unannounced operation by the Competition Authority is legal if this interference with the right to privacy is justified.**

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**No: 50805/14  
23/06/2022**

Press release issued by the Registrar

### **NAUMENKO AND SIA RIX SHIPPING v. LATVIA**

Legality and justification of surveillance methods that limit the right to privacy and correspondence

#### **Principal Facts**

The applicants are a company based in Latvia and its owner, Andrey Naumenko. They complain that they were subjected to a search in 2014, during which the company's business premises were searched and a large quantity of documents and electronic files were seized.

Against this unannounced operation, which they considered illegal, the applicants brought an action before the Latvian courts. The case was dismissed, so they took the matter to the ECHR.

Naumenko and SIA Rix Shipping v. Latvia (application no. 50805/14) The applicants are SIA RIX Shipping, a limited liability company based in Latvia, and its owner, Andrey Naumenko, a Russian national who was born in 1973 and lives in Riga. The case concerns a dawn raid on 28 January 2014 on the applicant company's business premises and the seizure of large amounts of documents and electronic files.

A judge of the Riga City Vidzeme District Court had granted the request to carry out the unannounced operation in the context of an investigation into the National Association of Latvian Shipbrokers and Shipping Agents ("the NALSA") on suspicion of an infringement of competition law. The Competition Authority subsequently fined the NALSA for setting a minimum or fixed price for its members for services rendered by shipping agents.

Relying on Article 8 (right to respect for home and correspondence) of the European Convention on Human Rights, the applicants allege that the search and seizure was unlawful and disproportionate and that procedural safeguards in place were insufficient.

#### **Law - Article 8**

On the basis of Article 8 of the Convention, the applicants claimed a violation of their rights to privacy and correspondence. The Court accepts that this search operation constitutes an interference with their rights under Article 8. However, it agrees with the Latvian courts that the interference was in accordance with the law and "pursued a legitimate aim of both the "economic well-being of the country" and the "prevention of crime". The interference is therefore legally justified.

Furthermore, the Court added that the interference was necessary "in a democratic society" since it was the Latvian judge who requested it and sufficient procedural safeguards were put in place to counterbalance the wide discretionary power conferred on the Competition Authority's officials.

## Conclusion

No violation of Article 8 in respect of the second applicant. The Court declared the remainder of the application inadmissible.

**160. Eur Court of HR, M.D. and Others v. Spain, judgment of 28 June 2022, application no. 36584/17.** The case concerned the compiling of files by the police in Catalonia on judges who had expressed certain views on that region's independence from Spain. Material from the files, including photographs, had been subsequently leaked to the press. The Court found in particular that the mere existence of the police reports, which had not been compiled in accordance with any law, had contravened the Convention. As for the investigation into the leak, the Court found it to have been inadequate owing to the failure to interview a person crucial to the investigation, the Senior Chief of Police of Barcelona. The Court consequently decided on a violation of Article 8 ECHR.

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**No: 36584/17**  
**28/06/2022**

Press release issued by the Registrar of the Court

### **M.D. AND OTHERS V. SPAIN**

Police files kept on Catalan judges based on political views constitutes a violation of Article 8 ECHR

#### **Principal facts**

The applicants are 20 Spanish nationals. They are serving judges and magistrates in Catalonia (Spain). In February 2014 they, along with 13 other judges, authored a manifesto which set out their opinion that the Catalan people should have a "right to decide" (that is to say on Catalan independence) under the Constitution and international law.

In March of that year, the newspaper La Razón published an article on their manifesto entitled "The conspiracy of the thirty-three separatist judges". The article included personal details and photographs – taken from the police database – of the applicants.

Following a complaint by the applicants, criminal proceedings were initiated, with the applicants also seeking damages. The complaint was dismissed, with the Investigating Judge no. 15 of Madrid holding that although "... the facts under investigation constitute[d] a criminal offence, ... there [were not] sufficient grounds for attributing them to a particular person". They appealed. In response to the appeal, the same investigating judge again could not attribute criminal responsibility, and dismissed it. They appealed again, with the Audiencia Provincial dismissing that appeal in April 2016.

In 2014 the applicants also complained to the Data Protection Agency about the article, naming both the Interior Ministry and La Razón. That was unsuccessful, but on appeal the Audiencia Nacional ordered that a full investigation be carried out, which is apparently still pending. Also in 2014 the Manos Limpias civil service trade union unsuccessfully lodged a complaint and subsequent appeal against the judges who had signed the manifesto with the General Council of the Judiciary.

#### **Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court**

Relying on Articles 8 (right to respect for private and family life), 10 (freedom of expression) and 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial), the applicants complained of the police compiling a file on them for no justification, using police photos, which then leaked to the press; of the disciplinary action against them for having

expressed their views; and that the investigation into their allegations had been inadequate. The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 26 April 2017.

## **Decision of the Court**

### **Article 8**

The Court reiterated that Article 8's primary purpose was to prevent interference by the police in the privacy of an individual's private or family life, home or correspondence. However, the Article also entailed an obligation to actively protect the individual from arbitrary interference with their privacy by the authorities. Regarding the police reports, it noted that there was no domestic legal provision authorising the compiling of such reports without some connection to a crime. The reports contained personal data, photographs and certain professional information (partially extracted from the police ID database), and, in some cases, political views. The Court concluded that the mere existence of such police reports had been in violation of Article 8. Concerning the leak and ensuing investigation, the Court stated that it was uncontested that the photos and some other information had been sourced in the police ID database. The domestic authorities had found it established that the Spanish State had been responsible for the leak. Although statements had been taken from some witnesses, in order to have had an effective investigation of the leak, it would have been necessary to have taken statements from the Senior Chief of Police of Barcelona, to whom the reports had been addressed and who had been responsible for the databases. This had not been done. Owing to its failure to carry out this investigative step, the State had failed to comply with its obligations under Article 8 of the Convention.

Given these findings, there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention.

### **Other articles**

The Court held that no sanction or chilling effect could be discerned from the fact that disciplinary proceedings had taken place and had been closed without any sanction having been imposed. It thus concluded that the complaint under Article 10 was inadmissible as manifestly ill-founded as their freedom of expression had been respected. 3 On examination of the facts, the Court considered that it was not necessary to examine the complaints under Article 6 § 1.

### **Just satisfaction (Article 41)**

The Court held that Spain was to pay the applicant 4,200 euros (EUR) in respect of non-pecuniary damage and EUR 3,993 in respect of costs and expenses

**161. Eur. Court of HR, Y.G. v. Russia, judgment of 30 August 2022, application no 8647/12. The applicant alleged that his personal data including data concerning health data was unlawfully disclosed through a database being sold in a market. The Court found a violation of Article 8.**

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**No: 8647/12  
30/08/2022**

Information Note on the Court's case-law 265

### **Y.G. v. RUSSIA**

Authorities' failure to adequately protect confidentiality of applicant's health data and to investigate its disclosure through a database being sold in a market

#### **Facts**

The applicant, who is HIV-positive and suffers from hepatitis, purchased a database from a Moscow market containing personal data in respect of more than 400,000 people registered as living in that city and its region, as well as information on people with HIV, AIDS and hepatitis. It also contained a compilation of the applicant's personal data, including his health data. The applicant complained to the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation ("Investigative Committee") which refused to carry out a pre-investigation inquiry. His judicial complaint against that decision was dismissed.

#### **Law – Article 8:**

As the database purchased by the applicant had contained a compilation of his personal data, including his health data, the circumstances of the present case fell within the scope of the applicant's private life protected under Article 8 § 1. Further, the mere storing of data relating to the private life of an individual amounted to an interference within the meaning of Article 8.

It was uncontested that only the authorities had access to most of the data on the database, such as criminal records and preventive measures that had been applied, and that, in the past, in the context of criminal proceedings against the applicant, the investigator in charge had sought information about the applicant's health condition from the Hospital for Infectious Diseases. Although it was in dispute whether the Ministry of the Interior had compiled the database, in the context of the case, there was no explanation other than that the State authorities, who had access to the data in question, had failed to prevent a breach of confidentiality. As a result, that data had become publicly available, thus engaging the responsibility of the respondent State. The circumstances of this major privacy breach had never been elucidated. The Court had repeatedly stressed the importance of appropriate safeguards to prevent the communication and disclosure of health data. The authorities had therefore failed to protect the confidentiality of the applicant's health data, also in breach of the relevant domestic provisions.

Furthermore, whilst in cases concerning alleged privacy violations, a criminal-law remedy was not always required, and civil-law remedies could be seen as sufficient, no civil remedy had been available to the applicant prior to lodging his application with the Court. In addition, the applicant's allegations had concerned the disclosure of his health data, as a part of the compilation of a vast amount of data and had been supported by prima facie evidence. In the face of such a major privacy breach, in practical terms, the applicant acting on his own, without the benefit of the State's assistance in the form of an official inquiry, had no effective means of establishing the perpetrators of these acts, proving their involvement and bringing proceedings against them in the domestic courts. Accordingly, the complaint

to the Investigative Committee could not be considered an inappropriate avenue of protection of his rights.

The authorities had never investigated the matter despite the evidence at hand, the existence of a legal framework for prosecuting intrusion into one's private life and the absence of any reasons precluding an investigation.

Consequently, the authorities had failed to comply with their positive obligation to ensure adequate protection of the applicant's right to respect for his private life.

**Conclusion:** violation (unanimously)

Article 41: EUR 7,500 in respect of non-pecuniary damage.

## **SUPERVISION OF THE EXECUTION OF JUDGMENTS AND DECISIONS OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **BGR / Insufficient guarantees against abuse of secret surveillance measures**

Association for European Integration and Human Rights and Ekimdzhiev (group) - Application No. 62540/00, judgment final on 30/04/2008, enhanced supervision

"Deficiencies of the legal framework on functioning of secret surveillance system; lack of effective remedy (Articles 8 and 13)"

**CM Decision:** Legislative reforms have been adopted to enhance the judicial control and regulation of the use of secret surveillance on national security grounds, notably through the setting-up of the National Bureau as an independent monitoring body which also carries out verifications upon request from individuals. These reforms have been welcomed by the CM. However, the fact that the initial authorisation of a surveillance measure for anti-terrorist or national security purposes has a validity of two years without any judicial review was found to raise questions as it could weaken the safeguard of judicial control. In June 2017, the CM thus invited the authorities to submit their assessment of possible measures to address these questions, as well as regarding the feasibility of a common database for requests for secret surveillance. Information was also requested concerning the courts competence to examine claims for compensation for unlawful use of surveillance (all remaining questions requiring clarifications are identified in document CM/Inf/DH(2013)7). Information gathered on the applicants and still in the authorities' possession at the time of the Court's judgment has been destroyed.

### **CZE / Inspection by the competition authorities in the absence of safeguards against arbitrariness**

Delta Pekárny A.S. - Application No. 97/11, judgment final on 02/01/2015, CM/ResDH(2017)299

"Search of a company's offices by the competition authorities, in the absence of judicial guarantees, in particular absence of prior judicial authorisation and of any possibility to effectively have the lawfulness reviewed after the search (Article 8)"

**Final resolution:** Questions regarding the lawfulness of an administrative body's decisions, even if already taken, may be brought before administrative courts following legislative amendments in 2012. In February 2016, the Supreme Administrative Court's confirmed that this protection covers also on-site inspections. That position was also codified in the Act on the Protection of Competition of 2001 by an amendment in 2016.

In new proceedings engaged after the Court's judgment, the judgment imposing on the company a fine for violation of competition rules (also challenged in the case before the European Court, but left undecided on the merits for non-exhaustion of domestic remedies) was quashed by the Constitutional Court in 2012. Subsequently, in a fresh action brought under Article 82 of the Code of Administrative Justice, the competent court declared the on-site inspection of 2003 lawful and proportionate. An appeal on points of law against this judgment is still pending before the Supreme Administrative Court. In a second set of proceedings, the Constitutional Court rejected the company's request for reopening, referring to its decision from 2012 concerning the substance of the issue.

#### **HUN / Insufficient guarantees against abuse of secret surveillance measures**

Szabó and Vissy - Application No. 37138/14, judgment final on 06/06/2016, enhanced supervision "Excessively vague wording of the 2011 Police Act and insufficient guarantees against abuse (only supervision by a politically responsible member of the executive) as regards secret surveillance measures authorised in the fight against terrorism or in order to rescue citizens abroad (Article 8)".

**CM Decision:** The Hungarian authorities acknowledged the need to amend the current legislation on secret surveillance measures, and informed the CM about the ongoing preparatory work to this aim. In December 2017, the CM invited the authorities to address the entirety of the shortcomings identified in the course of this work, and to provide comprehensive information on the intended reforms by 30 June 2018.

#### **LVA / Collection of personal medical data by a State agency without consent**

L.H. - Application No. 52019/07, judgment final on 29/07/2014, CM/ResDH(2017)64

"Ex officio collection of personal medical data from different medical institutions by a State agency (MADEKKI) in the process of an administrative inquiry concerning the applicant's health care on the basis of legal provisions lacking sufficient precision and adequate legal protection against arbitrary collection and use of the data (Article 8)"

**Final resolution:** Changes to the legal framework for the protection of the medical data were introduced, including changes in the context of review of the quality of health care. The competence of public institutions has been clarified by the Cabinet of Ministers' Order from 2007, and the State agency MADEKKI was integrated into the Health Inspectorate. Patient data may be used only with the patient's written consent or in specific enumerated cases, as provided for by the 2009 Law on the Rights of Patients. The law lists the public healthcare institutions entitled to receive, collect and use patient data. The Health Inspectorate is authorised to collect patient data to ensure supervision of the healthcare sector. The Law on the Rights of Patients also provides that the right to initiate proceedings before the Health Inspectorate to obtain an evaluation of the health care quality provided belongs only to the patient or his representative. It is thus no longer possible for a medical institution to initiate such proceedings without the patient's knowledge, as it happened in the present case. The data collected by the State agency in connection with the domestic dispute between the applicant and the hospital were destroyed.

#### **MDA / Disclosure of medical information to an employer**

Radu - Application No. 50073/07, judgment final on 15/07/20147, CM/ResDH(2017)347

"Disclosure of information of a medical nature by a medical institution to a person's employer, including sensitive details about her pregnancy, her state of health and treatment received despite an explicit prohibition in domestic legislation to disclose such information (Article 8)"

**Final resolution:** Rules and proceedings for the protection and management of personal data under the supervision of the Centre for Protection of Personal Data were set up by a new Law on the protection of personal data in 2012, which was adopted in the framework of the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data 1981 and its additional protocol as well as Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 1995

on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data. Instructions were issued by the Ministry of Health to all medical institutions. The judgment was published and disseminated. It is used in training activities by the National Institute of Justice. The medical documents at issue were destroyed by the employer.

**RUS / Interception of mobile telephone communications**

Roman Zakharov - Application No. 47143/06, judgment final on 04/12/2015, enhanced supervision  
“Shortcomings in the legal framework governing interception of mobile telephone communications (Article 8)”

**CM Decision:** An internal consultation process between all competent national bodies has been initiated, with a view to exploring the issue of introducing amendments and additions to the relevant legislation governing the interception of mobile telephone communication. However, no agreement has been reached yet between the authorities involved, and the CM thus invited them in December 2017 to rapidly bring this process to an end with a view to presenting the necessary legislative amendments. As regards individual measures, the just satisfaction awarded for cost and expenses has been paid. No other individual measures are necessary.