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Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Mandate: General Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

General Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders: Ms Thorhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir (Iceland, SOC) (appointed on 25 January 2022 - first mandate as of 30 January 2022)

- **Term of office:** one year renewable

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

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

Responsibilities:

The role of the general rapporteur is to:

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