



Newsletter



Navigating a change of era

Dear reader,

Looking back at this past April, I am struck by a recurring sentiment: we are standing at a pivotal crossroads in history. In my recent exchanges with the Committee of Ministers and Parliamentary Assembly, I've described this period as a change of era. This requires us to act decisively to save the treasure of human rights law that we risk losing.

Facing the hard winds

This month, I had the opportunity to present my 2025 Annual Report. I invited parliamentarians and ambassadors to acknowledge the hard winds we are currently facing. The European Convention system is at a precarious point. This is the duty of our generation: to act and ensure our invaluable *acquis* of human rights law and the protection system we built around it survive intact.

A threat to the middle ground of politics

An insidious dimension of the moment is the repudiation of human rights standards within the political middle ground. This shift is particularly evident at Europe's borders and in the management of migration, where a willingness to disavow fundamental principles has emerged that would have been unthinkable just a short time ago.

Read my [presentation to the Parliamentary Assembly](#) and [to the Committee of Ministers](#)

2 years in the job

My 2025 Annual Report details my work across four priority areas: standing up for the human rights of the people of Ukraine; embedding human rights in the great issues of the day (migration, AI, environment, inequality, ...); supporting forgotten people; and protecting human rights defenders and civil society.

Read my [2025 Annual Report](#)

Human rights at the heart of peace for Ukraine

I reiterated that a shift from a transactional to a people-centred approach to peace is required. A peace without justice, accountability, and ordinary people at the forefront – including prisoners of war, displaced persons, and civil society – would be unjust and would not survive.

In the face of Russia's large-scale attacks on Ukraine, I urged states to stand united in ensuring accountability and to provide broad support for the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine.

I had the opportunity to meet with the elected Mayor of Mariupol, Vadym Boychenko, and his delegation. I was deeply moved by the story of 13-year-old Illia Matviienko, who survived the brutal siege of the city. His testimony is a harrowing reminder of why the international community must recognise the sheer scale of war crimes committed in Mariupol, ensure that justice prevails, and provide support for displaced and other affected persons.

Honouring Roma and Travellers

April brought us International Roma Day, a day to recognise and respect the narratives reclaimed with pride by Roma and Traveller communities and to act against racism, poverty, exclusion, to build a future where the rights of all are respected.

Read my [statement Honouring narratives reclaimed with pride](#)

I called for political leadership and the allocation of adequate resources in the next EU budget to stand up for the human rights of Roma and Travellers. Protection of Europe's largest ethnic minority must remain at the heart of EU policy. This is not a short-term project; it is an intergenerational responsibility.

Read my [speech at Roma Week event in Brussels](#)

Alongside PACE General Rapporteur for Roma and Travellers Georgios Stamatis, I called for investing in remembrance. By honouring the past, we better equip ourselves to shape the present.

Read my [speech The vital role of remembrance for Roma and Travellers](#)

Country focus

In a letter to the Prime Minister of Armenia, I called on the authorities to move forward with a robust anti-discrimination framework. This would include an effective mandate and resources for the Human Rights Defender as an equality body; legal certainty in the protection of human rights of LGBTI people; addressing hate speech

Read my [exchange of letters with Prime Minister of Armenia](#)

In Georgia, I called on authorities to uphold democratic freedoms. I expressed concern over the lack of law enforcement accountability for alleged ill-treatment and called for the repeal of the "foreign influence" law. I also called for sustained attention to the rights of in and displaced from occupied territories.

Read my [end-of-visit statement for Georgia](#)

In my memorandum on Germany, I addressed the necessity of protecting civic space, freedom of expression and peaceful assemblies. I called for: better distinguishing between legitimate criticism of state policies and antisemitism; building on existing measures to protect Jewish communities and combat antisemitism; recognising anti-Muslim hatred as a societal problem and enhancing efforts to address it; and strengthening the anti-discrimination framework.

Read my [memorandum on Germany](#)

In a letter to the Minister of Interior of Poland, I reiterated my concerns regarding Poland's suspension of access to asylum and removal practices. I requested information on the measures taken to ensure their asylum and migration policies comply with the ECHR. I also raised my concerns regarding the suspension of asylum and removal practices. Even in times of pressure, our commitment to international protection standards must hold firm.

Read my [letter to the Minister of interior of Poland](#)

Looking ahead

As we move forward, I find hope in the fact that while the era is indeed changing, everywhere I go I see a reservoir of decency in people. Our duty now is to channel this decency with the human rights roadmap. Human rights must remain our constant north star.

Tomorrow at the Meeting of Council of Europe Foreign Affairs Ministers in Chişinău, our leaders have a very important opportunity to reaffirm core values, a belief in, a determination to defend the universality of human rights, to protect the independence of the European Court of Human Rights, and, as always, to stand up for the human rights of the people of Ukraine, insisting that people, their dignity and human rights, are embedded in every effort towards peace.

Michael O'Flaherty

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