

July 2025



News roundup



Reflections from July

Dear reader,

This past month's work was shaped by a sense of both urgency and resolve. Across Europe, human rights are being tested – from the continued brutal attacks by Russia against Ukraine, to the shrinking civic space in several countries, as well as the situation of Roma and children living in poverty.

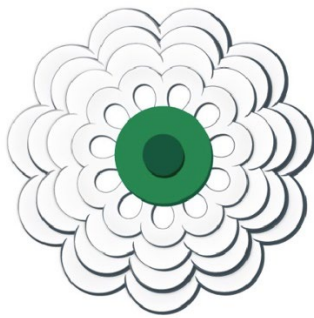


While the prospects of peace in Ukraine currently remain uncertain, I published a [Memorandum](#) in which I noted that a just, lasting and effective peace can only be achieved by anchoring it in the international human rights framework. Among the recommendations I made, there is the need to:

- Make the principle of accountability for perpetrators of gross violations of international human rights law and international crimes a key element of any discussions about peace;
- Ensure that all victims of Russia's internationally wrongful acts in or against Ukraine receive reparations;
- Place human rights at the heart of all planning for the return of internally displaced persons and refugees;
- Put into the peace equation the human rights situation of people living in areas of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia;

- Ensure the sustainability of Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery efforts, by making them human rights-based, victim-centred, inclusive, and participatory.

Speaking at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome, I [reiterated](#) the urgent need to place human rights at the centre of Ukraine's reconstruction and the return of displaced people.



On the occasion of the 30th commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide, I [recalled](#) the collective duty we all have to remember and honour the over 8,372 men and boys who were massacred there. I also highlighted the crucial role of civil society in warning against and responding to atrocities, and I urged renewed support for it across Europe. Protecting civil society is essential to ensuring justice, peace, and preventing future human rights violations.

In relation to Georgia, I issued a [statement](#) expressing concern about intrusive inquiries into NGOs that are at odds with Georgia's human rights commitments. I urged the Georgian authorities to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of association, and to put an end to all forms of harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders and civil society actors.

Amid increased civic unrest in Serbia, I [called](#) on the authorities to refrain from excessive use of force and arbitrary arrests, as well as to investigate all acts of violence, including those perpetrated by law enforcement, and to ensure that there is no impunity for such acts. Freedom of assembly and freedom of expression are key human rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights and it is Serbia's obligation to guarantee them. Accordingly, maintaining public order should always be ensured within a framework for democratic policing, where the protection of human rights lies at its heart.



The Commissioner visits the Magpie Project, a civil society initiative in the East London Borough of Newham supporting mothers with children under five affected by the No Recourse to Public Funds policy.

During my visit to the United Kingdom, I [emphasised](#) that tackling child poverty is vital to upholding children's human rights. While welcoming initial government steps, I urged bolder action, including ending the two-child limit for social security entitlements and the benefit cap. In addition, I raised concerns over the management of irregular migration, restrictions on the right to protest, the situation of trans people, and the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

On migration, I [urged](#) members of the Greek parliament to reject an amendment providing for the suspension of the registration of asylum applications submitted by persons arriving by boat from North Africa, as well as for their forcible return, without registration, to their country of origin or provenance. I regret that this amendment was adopted.

In relation to Montenegro, I [called](#) on the Parliament not to adopt legislative amendments that would excessively restrict freedom of peaceful assembly. The amendments to the Law on Public Gatherings and Public Events, which proposed prohibiting all public gatherings on roads and streets that impede traffic and freedom of movement, were incompatible with international human rights standards, in particular Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights. I welcome that they were not adopted.

Regarding North Macedonia, I published a [Memorandum](#) on the human rights of Roma and the human rights implications of serious environmental challenges. I urged stronger action against school segregation of Roma children, police violence, and to address the plight of children in street situations. Observing that environmental degradation is affecting public health, I called for stronger

enforcement of relevant laws, ensuring access to justice, protection of environmental human rights defenders, and swift adoption of the Climate Law.

Thank you for reading,

Michael O'Flaherty

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

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