



Newsletter



A pivotal crossroads and the need for principled leadership

Dear reader,

We have emerged from a bruising few months for the protection of human rights. The journey from the "Letter of 9" last May to the adoption of the Chişinău Declaration has been concerning, with some European governments seeking to weaken the European Convention on Human Rights and the Strasbourg Court. Now that the Declaration has been adopted, we find ourselves at a pivotal crossroads.

The stakes after **Chişinău**

Do our governments truly grasp what is at stake? In an op-ed placed in *Le Monde*, I restated some fundamentals:

- 1- States must make it clear that no human being will be assigned an inferior status because they migrated or sought protection.
- 2- They must honour the absolute prohibition of *non-refoulement* in law and in practice.
- 3- Political overreach must cease.

Read my [op-Ed in French in Le Monde](#)

Read my [op-ed in English After Chisinau: Europe, wake up!](#)

Read my [speech at the Chisinau meeting of Council of Europe ministers of foreign affairs](#)

Avoiding a protection gap for Ukrainians displaced across Europe

As Russia's war against Ukraine escalates, no region of Ukraine is safe. Hearing the stories and concerns of Ukrainians I met in Karlsruhe, Chişinău and Strasbourg has reinforced my commitment to standing by the people of Ukraine. In the face of a growing fatigue and intensifying discussions at EU and national levels about the future of emergency arrangements for Ukrainians displaced across Europe, the moment calls for more solidarity, not less. European leaders need to guarantee that every person displaced by the war in Ukraine has a secure legal status and access to rights for as long as protection is needed.

Read my [Shout Out "Safeguarding Ukrainians displaced across Europe"](#)

"Disarming AI" to defend human dignity

Pope Leo XIV's release of his first encyclical, 'Magnifica Humanitas' ('Magnificent Humanity') comes at a time when there is pushback against robust, enforceable regulation of AI. The encyclical helps us greatly in insisting on such a framework, so I shared seven principles that I believe are at the core of effective oversight. While implementing these principles will be

challenging, the Pope threw the gauntlet to all of us to “disarm AI” to honour our shared human dignity.

Read my article [“Disarming AI” to defend human dignity: Seven principles for effective oversight](#)

Meeting our climate obligations

In a [welcome vote](#) at the United Nations, 42 of the 46 Council of Europe member states supported the landmark General Assembly resolution endorsing the ICJ Advisory Opinion on climate obligations. The leadership of Vanuatu and the Core Group is commendable. The adoption signals a powerful commitment to the rule of law, human rights and urgent collective action. As climate change accelerates, states must comply with their obligations, turning commitments into ambitious, science-based action.

Re-engaging and standing for human rights

At the IDAHOT+ Forum in Copenhagen, I underscored the broader pushback to human rights, and the need to support civil society. I call on all state actors to re-engage and show leadership and determination in standing up for human rights. Despite progress, deep wells of discrimination and exclusion against LGBTI people remain across Europe.

[Watch my message at IDAHOT+](#)

Remembering Roma Resistance

May brought us Roma Resistance Day, a day to honour the Roma who resisted at Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944. Their courage lives on in every Roma rights defender fighting for dignity and justice across Europe today. We must challenge antigypsyism and unite to build a world where everyone is equal in dignity and in rights.

Country focus

In a memorandum on violence against women in Armenia, I highlight that, while notable progress has been made, issues remain around the legal framework and survivor-centred reforms and support. I encourage the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and call for better law enforcement and protection of survivors.

Read my [memorandum on violence against women in Armenia](#)

During my visit to Serbia, I was struck by how the overall situation of civic space has degraded in the last year, especially with regards to freedom of expression, media freedom, freedom of peaceful assembly.

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

In my memorandum on Türkiye, I call for reforms to protect freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and judicial independence and to strengthen human rights protection.

Read my [memorandum on Türkiye](#)

These are challenging times for human rights. Principled leadership is needed. The release of Pope Leo XIV's Encyclical is a powerful act of global leadership well beyond the topic of AI, at exactly the right moment and it gives me hope.

Thank you for reading,

Michael O'Flaherty



Death - Roma Train to Auschwitz-Birkenau (1992) painting by Ceija Stojka (1933-2013), Roma artist, Holocaust survivor who bore witness of the camps and spoke out against denial and forgetting, and against the antigypsyism pervasive in Europe. Art work from the collection of the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno. Courtesy of European Roma Institute of Arts and Culture (ERIAN).

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