

Press Release

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PACE President reacts to George Bush's admission of secret CIA prisons

Strasbourg, 07.09.2006 – Reacting to the statement by President Bush yesterday, René van der Linden, the President of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), made the following statement today:

"President Bush's admission yesterday that there have been secret CIA prisons abroad vindicates the exhaustive investigation carried out by the Council of Europe in recent months. There were those who doubted our rapporteur Mr Marty and scorned his brief - they have been proved wrong, and the Council's unique role in upholding European human rights values has been affirmed. Our work has helped to flush out the dirty nature of this secret war, which - we learn at last - has been carried out completely beyond any legal framework.

President Bush says that these secret detentions - and interrogations carried out under what he calls "an alternative set of procedures" - have prevented further attacks and saved lives. Because of the secrecy, this claim can never be verified. Yet even if it is true, such methods will, in the long term, make us less safe, not more. Kidnapping people and torturing them in secret - however tempting the short-term gain may appear to be - is what criminals do, not democratic governments. In the long term, such practices create more terrorists and undermine the values we are fighting for. Europe will have no part in such a degrading system.

All detainees must now to be treated according to the Geneva Conventions, and these fourteen suspects given a fair trial, fully in line with international and human rights law.

Countering terrorism is an absolute priority for the Council of Europe, and will remain at the top of our political agenda. But, as Mr Marty has rightly said, human rights violations committed in the fight against terrorism are in fact victories for the terrorists, whose very aim is to destroy the Rule of Law."

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 315 members from the national parliaments of the 46 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).