

Press Release

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Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis: we cannot win the fight against terrorists with secret prisons and torture

Strasbourg, 04.03.2008 - Speaking today at the High Level segment of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Secretary General spoke on several topical issues concerning the protection of human rights in Europe and in the world.

On the fight against terrorism and human rights

"Our response to extremists must be robust and effective, but it must also be fair. There is no contradiction between these imperatives. The fact is that we cannot win the fight against terrorism with secret prisons, with torture, with inhuman and degrading treatment, with people being deprived of safeguards which are the foundation of democracy and justice. These methods are dangerous, and they are exactly what terrorists want."

On the United Nations and European Union blacklists

"The procedures used by the United Nations Security Council and the European Union to blacklist individuals and groups suspected of having connections with terrorism may be incompatible with the obligation of our member states under the European Convention on Human Rights. Personally I believe that our Convention should be considered *ius cogens*, and that states which are parties to the Convention must balance their obligations under the UN Charter with their obligations under the Convention."

On the abolition of the death penalty

"Protocols 6 and 13 to the European Convention on Human Rights have led to the abolition of capital punishment in Europe in all circumstances. There has not been an execution in any member state of the Council of Europe for 10 years. But abolishing the death penalty is not enough. We must make sure that the people living in our member states understand accept and support the reasons for its abolition. That is why, in October last year, the Council of Europe established a European Day against the Death Penalty with which the European Union has now associated itself. I was very pleased to see the Resolution calling for a moratorium on the death penalty adopted by the General Assembly in December last year. This represents a welcome step towards the abolition of the death penalty world-wide. Executions anywhere in the world are all the more regrettable in as much as they blatantly flout the United Nations General Assembly resolution."

[Full version of the speech by the Secretary General](#)

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.