

# Press Release

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## Georgia: 17 detainees exchanged through the good offices of Commissioner Hammarberg

Strasbourg, 25.08.2008 - During his mission to the areas affected by the South Ossetian conflict, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg visited on 24 August the town of Tskhinvali and neighboring Ossetian and Georgian villages that have suffered from the clashes.

The Commissioner observed that among the most pressing human rights concerns pertaining to the conflict was the return from both sides of the persons detained. Commissioner Hammarberg raised this issue with the de facto South Ossetian authorities and the Georgian authorities and managed to convince them to liberate a number of detained persons.

An exchange of a total of 17 detainees took place late in the evening at the check point of Karateli between the Commissioner and the Georgian parliamentarian Givi Targamadze, in the presence of the Georgian Minister of Justice, Mr. Nika Gvaramia. The Ombudsman of Georgia, Mr. Sozar Subari and the Ombudsman of South Ossetia, Mr. David Sanakoev were present.

"At this difficult time, both sides must be encouraged to respect core human rights principles and humanitarian law. Further exchanges are necessary. Such gestures of good-will by both sides are important humanitarian acts to save lives, to protect human rights of those victimized by the conflict and to start rebuilding mutual confidence between the parties" states the Commissioner.

### Media contacts:

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The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent, non-judicial institution within the Council of Europe, mandated to promote awareness of, and respect for, human rights in the 47 member States of the Organisation. Elected by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the present Commissioner, Mr Thomas Hammarberg, took up his function on 1 April 2006.

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