

Press Release

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Commissioner Hammarberg marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Strasbourg, 09.12.2008 – On the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg has published today two audio messages and a video statement marking this anniversary.

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights stresses in his messages that "the Declaration is a landmark document which has shaped the spirit of human rights activities all over the world." He underlines two main strong points: "First, it is the most authoritative definition of what human rights are and which recognises social and economic rights as full human rights. Second, its legitimacy does not come only from its acceptance by governments, but in particular from the vibrant support it receives in all societies. For these reasons it is a major source for all people committed to change the world for the better."

The Commissioner further affirms that "there is still a long way to go to have the Declaration's principles respected in everyday life. I see a deterioration of human rights protection in several areas: data protection, discrimination, xenophobia, protection of vulnerable groups of people. Counter-terrorism measures have also contributed to a widespread deterioration of human rights. In particular, complicity or silence in the US-initiated war on terror has brought Europe brutally backward. Furthermore, in times of economic crisis, there are already signs that the less wealthy will suffer most from the recession the world is facing. It is therefore crucial that all measures are taken to ensure the protection of social rights."

Commissioner Hammarberg concluded stressing that the Declaration's 30 articles "are still topical today and have kept intact all their potential to address fundamental human needs in the future. It is essential that we use the Declaration for a grassroots work of human rights re-education and explanation to the public about the fundamental values. The Declaration must be therefore used to inspire policies and attitudes to let people enjoy inalienable rights everywhere, anytime."

The podcasts and the video messages can be downloaded from the [Commissioner's website](#).

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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 organisation's 47 member states. Elected by the Council's Parliamentary Assembly, the present Commissioner, Thomas Hammarberg, took up his duties on 1 April 2006.

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