

Press Release

Parliamentary Assembly Communication Unit

Ref: 242a07

Tel: +33 3 88 41 31 93

Fax :+33 3 90 21 41 34

pace.com@coe.int

internet: www.coe.int/press



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PACE calls for 'zero tolerance' of human rights violations in Europe

Strasbourg, 18.04.2007 – The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) today demanded that European governments institute a policy of "zero tolerance" towards human rights violations in Europe and take action on the worst violations – such as enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, torture and secret detentions – to preserve the Council of Europe's credibility.

In a recommendation and resolution adopted at the end of a special debate on human rights and democracy on the continent, the parliamentarians denounced "the gap between standards on paper and the reality on the ground" as regards both human rights and democracy, and declared: "It is time to end hypocrisy and turn words into deeds".

The Assembly called on governments to strengthen the Council itself, focus its work on priorities and give it the means to do its job. It also said "decision-making by consensus" could lead to paralysis, and called for greater investigative powers for the Assembly.

PACE said there were a "growing number of deficits" in European democracy and proposed reinforced monitoring, enlarging the right to vote, greater representation for women, more "direct democracy", measures to ensure a free media and enhanced civic education.

The Assembly also decided to establish an annual award for "outstanding civil society action in the defence of human rights", selected by independent personalities with internationally-recognised expertise in the field. PACE President René van der Linden, who initiated the idea, said: "I expect this annual award to reward outstanding actions of human rights defenders who strive, often at great personal risk, to uphold Council of Europe human rights values and standards."

The all-day debate brought together – for the first time – leading figures from the global human rights community and showcased the Council's own range of monitoring mechanisms.

[Summaries of speeches made](#)
[Special file on the debate](#)

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).