

Press Release

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"Rape crimes must be prosecuted more effectively" says Commissioner Hammarberg

Strasbourg, 11.01.2010 - "Sexual assault of women is one of the most serious and widespread human rights problems of our time. More needs to be done both to prevent and punish such crimes", said Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, in his latest Viewpoint published today.

The Commissioner stresses that though the legislation on sexual assault has improved considerably in European countries, the court proceedings are generally not sufficiently adapted to the seriousness of this crime and to its psychological impact upon the victims. He therefore recommends that protecting women from this threat be a political priority and that a fairer justice be granted to the cases brought to court.

"Sexual assault crimes must be taken more seriously by governments and parliaments" he said. "The injuries inflicted by rape are deep and long-lasting, in many cases gravely hurting the physical and psychological integrity of the victims. Though these crimes are largely hidden and their precise scale is difficult to determine, they are widespread and too many women live in fear of being assaulted."

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