

Press Release

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Statement by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the anniversary of the 11 September terrorist attacks on the United States

Strasbourg, 10.09.2006 - On the fifth anniversary of the 11 September attacks, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg extends his sincere sympathy to the victims' families and all those who have suffered as a direct result of acts of terrorism. "Victims of terrorism are often eclipsed in State responses to terrorist acts", the Commissioner said. He stressed that victims of terrorism need not just immediate care, but have a genuine right to long-term assistance, including psychological support, effective access to the law and courts, access to information and protection of private and family life. The Commissioner encouraged States to use the Council of Europe's Guidelines on the Protection of Victims of Terrorist Acts (2005) as a benchmark in this area.

The Commissioner also expressed his grave concern of government encroachment on civil liberties during the fight against terrorism. "Suspects have been interrogated under torture and deprived of liberty without due process. Such methods are not only ineffective but undermine the ethical foundation of a free, democratic society," the Commissioner said.

"There is now an urgent need to learn from this failure. The total prohibition of torture must be reaffirmed and the policy of extra-ordinary renditions and secret detentions terminated. National security services should be based on clear and appropriate legislation providing for adequate safe-guards against abuse. Governments should secure parliamentary oversight of these agencies and, where human rights are affected, an effective judicial control."

For more information on the Commissioner's activities, please visit www.commissioner.coe.int

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