Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Recommendation 1866 (2009)**[1]

# Situation of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member states

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Referring to its Resolution 1660 (2009) on the situation of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member states, the Parliamentary Assembly commends the Committee of Ministers for the swift preparation and adoption of its Declaration on Council of Europe action to improve the protection of human rights defenders and promote their activities, on 6 February 2008. It welcomes the fact that the Committee of Ministers has decided to keep under review the question of further Council of Europe action in this field.

2. The Assembly also welcomes the adoption by the Committee of Ministers, on 10 October 2007, of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe, and the subsequent establishment of an Expert Council on NGO Law by the Council of Europe Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations.

3. The Assembly considers that the Council of Europe, through the full range of its human rights instruments and bodies, should further increase its contribution to the protection of human rights defenders and their work in a long-term perspective, as well as in specific cases requiring urgent action.

4. The Assembly welcomes the reinforced mandate given to the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to protect and support human rights defenders in Council of Europe member states and fully supports his efforts to carry out this mandate. The Assembly is also ready to play an active role and to co-operate with and help the Commissioner with this task when the need arises.

5. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

5.1. call on all member states to give appropriate follow-up to the issues raised in Resolution 1660 (2009), particularly those concerning the issue of emergency visas, or any other appropriate measures, to support and protect human rights defenders at risk or in situations requiring urgent action;

5.2. continue to give the necessary political support to the institution of the Commissioner for Human Rights and provide it with necessary resources;

5.3. give appropriate follow-up to the work of the Commissioner for Human Rights as well as other relevant protection mechanisms successfully invoked by human rights defenders;

5.4. strengthen its own efforts to eradicate violations of the rights of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member states, in particular the most serious ones, such as assassinations, abductions, arbitrary arrests and detention, unfair trials and ill-treatment, and eradicate impunity for any such violation;

5.5. increase the focus on human rights defenders within the Council of Europe's human rights awareness-raising and training activities, notably those concerning law-enforcement bodies and the media;

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 April 2009 (12th Sitting) (see Doc. 11841, report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Haibach). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 April 2009 (12th Sitting).

5.6. continue to support the Council of Europe Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations and the Expert Council on NGO Law and give concrete follow-up to their work and findings;

5.7. pay increased attention to the issue of human rights defenders and to the role of the Council of Europe in promoting and protecting such defenders in its relations with other intergovernmental organisations.