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Violence and hate speech against politicians: a threat to democracy

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A. Draft Resolution

1. Violence against politicians is alarmingly on the rise in many Council of Europe member and observer States. The Parliamentary Assembly unequivocally condemns all forms of violence against politicians, and reaffirms that violence has no place in democracy.
2. Representative democracy can only be achieved if political candidates are allowed to campaign safely and peacefully, and if elected officials are free to carry out their duties, with integrity and based on a public conduct dedicated to the interest of the community they represent, protected from any kind of harm. Any violent attack on a politician, regardless of their political affiliation, should be considered as an attack on democracy itself.
3. Politicians at all levels of government, and from all political backgrounds, can be victims of violence: political candidates, party members, elected officials and policy-makers with an institutional role. Their relatives and associates are often affected, too.
4. Urgent action must be taken to prevent and counter violence against politicians, as it fosters an atmosphere of fear which has a chilling effect on democratic participation in political life.
5. Politicians who experience violence may feel compelled to alter their behaviour, limit their participation in public events, or reduce their engagement with constituents. They may also decide to self-censor, avoiding discussion of certain controversial issues or even changing their stance on certain policies. Eventually, they may decide to step back from their role or choose not to stand for re-election. Similarly, individuals who are considering entering politics may be deterred by violence: this reduces pluralism and representativeness, and affects the quality of democratic processes.
6. Intimidation, threats and other forms of verbal or physical attacks can also have a critical impact on the mental well-being of politicians, reducing their ability to work and serve the public.
7. Certain categories, including women politicians and representatives of minority groups, are disproportionately targeted, through gender-based violence, sexual threats, misogynist, homophobic or racist attacks. They therefore deserve particular attention, to ensure that they are not discouraged from participating in politics, and to safeguard the diversity and representativeness of elected officials.

Amendment 11

Tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

In the draft resolution, paragraph 7, first sentence, after the words "minority groups", insert the following words:

"as well as young politicians and public officials".

8. The disenchantment of citizens with democratic processes and institutions has been exacerbated by populist movements. At the same time, fear-mongering, hate speech and dehumanising rhetoric have become normalised in public discourse. This is fuelling the political polarisation of democracies, characterised by heightened tension and animosity among groups with opposing political views. The deterioration of the political sphere creates fertile ground for violence against politicians, which could spiral out of control.

Amendment 12

Tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

In the draft resolution, paragraph 7, first sentence, replace the word "homophobic" with the following word:

"LGBTI-phobic".

Amendment 4

(If adopted, amendment 5 falls)

Tabled by Ms Sophia CHIKIROU, Ms Janina BÖTTGER, Ms Gabrielle CATHALA, Mr Dionysios-Charalampos KALAMATIANOS, Mr Emmanuel FERNANDES

In the draft resolution, replace paragraph 8 with the following paragraph:

"The Assembly notes with concern that hate speech, fear-mongering and dehumanising rhetoric have become increasingly normalised in public discourse, contributing to political polarisation and to a climate of intimidation that undermines democratic life. It stresses that, in several member States, far-right movements and the networks circulating around them play a particularly harmful role in spreading such rhetoric and in fostering violence against politicians."

Amendment 5

(Falls if amendment 4 is adopted)

Tabled by Ms Sophia CHIKIROU, Ms Janina BÖTTGER, Ms Gabrielle CATHALA, Mr Dionysios-Charalampos KALAMATIANOS, Mr Emmanuel FERNANDES

In the draft resolution, paragraph 8, second sentence, after the words "At the same time," insert the following words:

"particularly under the influence of far-right movements,"

Amendment 6

Tabled by Ms Sophia CHIKIROU, Ms Janina BÖTTGER, Ms Gabrielle CATHALA, Mr Dionysios-Charalampos KALAMATIANOS, Mr Emmanuel FERNANDES

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 8, insert the following paragraph:

"The Assembly points out that the analysis and prevention of political violence must take account of the documented asymmetries between varying forms of political radicalisation. It calls on member States to explicitly pinpoint what role is played by organised groups and networks which legitimise, prepare or claim

9. The Assembly notes that violence against politicians can occur in various forms, both online and offline. This violence can be economic, psychological, sexual or physical in nature, and it can range from verbal abuse and harassment to intimidation, physical threats and attacks, and even lethal violence.
10. Online abuse against politicians includes, inter alia: sustained harassment and co-ordinated attacks, such as the co-ordinated misuse of reporting mechanisms with the intent to silence or unjustifiably suspend their accounts; threats (including anonymous threats); doxxing and other forms of unlawful disclosure of personal data; cyberstalking; impersonation; and the dissemination of manipulated or deceptive content intended to intimidate, silence or discredit politicians, including through attacks targeting their relatives or associates.
11. The Assembly is also concerned about the increasing use of deepfakes against politicians: these are audio recordings, images or video generated or manipulated by artificial intelligence that realistically depict a person saying or doing something they did not say or do, including the fabrication or alteration of public statements and the impersonation of politicians.
12. Acts of violence against politicians are often committed with the ultimate goal of intimidating and silencing them, forcing them to change their views, actions, or policies; yet, in many cases, such violence is driven simply by disrespect and hatred, without any clear objective.
13. The Assembly reiterates that robust political debate, that includes sharp criticism and satire, forms part of democratic pluralism and is protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5). However, threats, incitement to violence, targeted harassment and dehumanising hate speech, whether online or offline, are incompatible with a democratic society and cannot be justified under the freedom of expression.
14. Choosing violence over dialogue is antithetical to all democratic principles. In a vicious circle, the increased number of episodes of violence against politicians is therefore a clear symptom that democracy in Europe is backsliding, and is also one of the causes of this backsliding, as violence undermines political participation, representation and institutions, and ultimately democratic resilience.

responsibility for acts of violence, particularly within far-right movements."

Amendment 13
Tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 14, insert the following paragraph:

"The Assembly highlights that, in addition to internal societal dynamics, violence and hate speech against politicians may be the result of external interference and hybrid warfare strategies".

Amendment 1
Tabled by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV, Ms Larysa BILOZIR, Ms Olena KHOMENKO, Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA, Ms Iryna

KONSTANKEVYCH, Ms Tamila TASHEVA, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 14, insert the following paragraph:

"The Assembly notes that, in the context of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine, Ukrainian politicians are increasingly subject to extraterritorial targeting by foreign intelligence services. Elected representatives face heightened risks of State-sponsored assassinations and physical elimination, both within the conflict zone and across Council of Europe member States. Such operations, aimed at dismantling national leadership, constitute a direct assault on the democratic order and the sovereign integrity of States."

15. The Assembly recalls that the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe adopted in 2023 the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, through which they committed to "ensure full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life for all, in particular for women and girls, free from violence, fear, harassment, hate speech and hate crime, as well as discrimination based on any ground" (Principle 10).
16. Furthermore, the Assembly reiterates the conclusions of the Conference of Presidents of Parliament held in Strasbourg on 20-21 March 2025, which indicate that violence against politicians undermines democratic processes and erodes trust in institutions. The conclusions also underline the need to make the fight against this phenomenon a priority, to preserve democracy.

Amendment 2

Tabled by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Ms Olena KHOMENKO, Ms Larysa BILOZIR, Ms Iryna KONSTANKEVYCH, Ms Tamila TASHEVA, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO, Mr Rostyslav TISTYK

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 16, insert the following paragraph:

"The Assembly was profoundly shocked by the assassination of Andriy Parubiy, former Speaker and an incumbent member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, on 30 August 2025 in Lviv. The investigation established that the assassin had been recruited by Russian intelligence services more than a year prior to the attack and acted under their co-ordination. This incident marks a dangerous escalation in the nature of political violence in Europe, representing a shift from domestic threats to systematic, State-sponsored 'proxy' operations aimed at the physical elimination of political leadership. The Assembly emphasises that Ukrainian politicians, particularly those pivotal to national security and State resilience, remain high-priority targets for hostile intelligence entities. This case underscores that the threat persists regardless of an individual's current official status or geographic location, necessitating a fundamental reassessment of cross-border security co-operation and protection protocols for those targeted by aggressor States."

17. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the ongoing work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe entitled "Preserving grassroots democracy – Tackling violence against local and regional elected representatives".
18. Considering the Council of Europe's ongoing initiatives towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe, the Assembly believes that Council of Europe member and observer States should renew their social contracts with citizens through whole-of-society initiatives involving all relevant stakeholders: national governments and parliaments, local authorities and councils, the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, civil society organisations, academic institutions, media and businesses.
19. The objective should be to reinstate appreciation for those who decide to dedicate their time and efforts to public life, to uphold the bonds that keep democracies together, and to strengthen the boundaries of dialogue, respect, tolerance and mutual understanding that prevent violence, thus reinforcing democratic security.
20. In line with these considerations, the Assembly calls on member and observer States of the Council of Europe to:
 - 20.1. adopt robust legislation that recognises the different forms of violence against politicians as specific criminal offences or aggravating circumstances, and imposes tougher penalties where appropriate, in accordance with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, to demonstrate zero tolerance of this phenomenon;
 - 20.2. identify appropriate regulatory tools to prevent social and traditional media from disseminating incitement to violence, hate speech, dehumanising discourse or other inflammatory content, while safeguarding freedom of expression, ensuring transparency, due process and effective remedies and avoiding opaque delegations to private actors in defining lawful political opinion, as well as regulatory tools to observe if and how social media companies deal with shadow banning and organised blocking campaigns that hinder free speech of politicians;
 - 20.3. promote safeguards against manipulated content (including deepfakes) used to threaten, impersonate or incite violence against politicians, focusing on authenticity and transparency measures such as clear labelling of synthetic content, provenance/traceability tools and effective and timely remedies (including notification and right of reply), under transparent procedures and independent oversight, without delegating to private actors the power to restrict lawful political opinion;
 - 20.4. make human and financial resources available to law enforcement and the judiciary, to ensure that all forms of

Amendment 10

Tabled by Mr Serhii SOBOLIEV, Mr Sergiy VLASENKO, Mr Christophe BRICO, Ms Christine PASQUIER-CIULLA, Mr Ionuț-Marian STROE

In the draft resolution, paragraph 20.1, after the words "where appropriate", insert the following words:

"; introduce or strengthen legislation to prohibit or limit the disclosure by law enforcement authorities of information concerning ongoing investigations involving politicians at early stages without prior judicial authorisation,"

violence against politicians are investigated and prosecuted swiftly, properly and effectively, possibly through specialised units that can ensure appropriate levels of co-ordination among the relevant authorities;

- 20.5. ensure that public institutions protect all political voices equally when implementing anti-violence policies, avoiding any ideological bias, respecting freedom of speech and freedom of press;

Amendment 8

Tabled by Mr Emmanuel FERNANDES, Ms Ann GRAVES, Ms Sevilay ÇELENK, Ms Laura CASTEL, Mr George LOUCAIDES, Ms Janina BÖTTGER

In the draft resolution, at the end of paragraph 20.5, insert the following words:

"while fully ensuring that the fight against hate speech, particularly racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic speech, is implemented in compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights."

- 20.6. protect the physical and psychological well-being of politicians at all levels, with a particular focus on women politicians and representatives of minority groups, without creating hierarchies of protection and ensuring equal safeguards for all political voices, ensuring their preparedness and safety by providing protection measures, such as regular risk assessments, the provision of emergency buttons, alarm systems, and enhanced democratic surveillance;

Amendment 3

Tabled by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Ms Larysa BILOZIR, Ms Olena KHOMENKO, Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA, Ms Iryna KONSTANKEVYCH, Ms Tamila TASHEVA, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA-FEDORENKO, Mr Rostyslav TISTYK

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 20.6, insert the following paragraph:

"ensure that security frameworks move beyond static, rank-based measures towards dynamic, threat-informed protection protocols; specifically, for politicians targeted by aggressor States, protection must be maintained as long as the threat persists, regardless of their current official status, with particular emphasis on preventing and countering intelligence-led cross-border operations;"

- 20.7. combat the targeting of politicians' private lives and families, including doxxing and other unlawful disclosures of personal data, by strengthening rapid-response reporting channels, effective removal procedures for unlawfully disclosed personal data, and law-enforcement follow-up, coupled with risk assessment measures to prevent escalation into offline violence;
- 20.8. provide politicians at all levels with capacity building on safety measures, guidelines on cybersecurity, legal and psychological support, and other resources where needed;
- 20.9. strengthen debate spaces and opportunities for citizens to participate through participatory and deliberative democracy processes, including civil society organisations in them;
- 20.10. conduct public campaigns and implement learning programmes for civic education and media literacy, to renew citizens' civic responsibility and trust in institutions, with a special focus on younger generations;

- 20.11. promote cross-party dialogue and a political culture based on transparency, respect and responsibility, as well as rejection of violence and hate speech, across the entire political spectrum;

Amendment 9

Tabled by Mr Emmanuel FERNANDES, Ms Ann GRAVES, Ms Sevilay ÇELENK, Ms Laura CASTEL, Mr George LOUCAIDES, Ms Janina BÖTTGER

In the draft resolution, paragraph 20.11, replace the words "across the entire political spectrum;" with the following words:

"while recognising that democratic debate may legitimately be conflictual and based on deep political disagreements;

- 20.12. improve the collection of data at all levels, to properly analyse the phenomenon; identify its underlying causes; categorise the different methods and means of violence, and how they target different groups, through an intersectional approach; assess how citizens respond to episodes of violence against politicians; and monitor the developments, to tailor relevant legislation and policies;

- 20.13. consider establishing a mechanism to identify, track and raise awareness of specific threats or episodes of violence against politicians at local, regional, and national levels.

21. The Assembly notes that politicians have a primary responsibility to set an example of civic, tolerant and democratic conduct. It therefore calls on politicians at all levels to refrain from using inflammatory, dehumanising rhetoric and from inciting violence. The Assembly also invites politicians to condemn all acts of violence, in all their forms, especially when they are perpetrated against their peers from different parties.

Amendment 7

Tabled by Ms Sophia CHIKIROU, Ms Janina BÖTTGER, Ms Gabrielle CATHALA, Mr Dionysios-Charalampos KALAMATIANOS, Mr Emmanuel FERNANDES

In the draft resolution, paragraph 21, after the second sentence, insert the following sentence:

"In particular, it calls on them not to trivialise, instrumentalise or relay xenophobic and racist discourse that fuels far-right violence."

Amendment 14

Tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 21, insert the following paragraph:

"The Assembly reiterates its support for the work of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, as a forum for discussion specialising in measures to address hate speech."

22. Furthermore, the Assembly invites national parliaments and local councils, as well as political parties to:

- 22.1. adopt dedicated codes of conduct, to avoid that politicians target their peers from different parties with abusive behaviours;

Amendment 15

Tabled by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

In the draft resolution, before paragraph 22.1, insert the following paragraph:

"subscribe to the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-racist and Inclusive Society, as endorsed by Resolution 2443 (2022) "The role of

political parties in fostering diversity and inclusion: a new charter for a non-racist society", and fully implement its provisions:"

- 22.2. adopt security protocols and monitoring and alert mechanisms to provide adequate psychological and physical support to their members when they are the victims of verbal or physical attacks.

Amendment 16

Tabled by Mr Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Ms Victoria TIBLOM, Mr Jon ENGEN-HELGHEIM, Mr Vladimir ĐORĐEVIĆ, Mr Markus WIECHEL, Ms Dumitrina MITREA, Mr Adam BALTEN, Ms Cristina Gabriella DUMITRESCU

In the title of the draft resolution delete the following words:

"and hate speech"

B. Draft Recommendation

1. The Parliamentary Assembly draws the Committee of Ministers' attention to its Resolution...(2026) "Violence and hate speech against politicians: a threat to democracy", in which it underlines that violence against politicians is on the rise in many Councils of Europe member and observer States.
2. The Assembly is concerned that violence against politicians at all levels can have a chilling effect on democratic participation in political life, thereby reducing pluralism, representativeness, and the quality of democratic processes and institutions. Intimidation, threats and other forms of verbal, physical or sexual attacks can also have a critical impact on the mental well-being of politicians, reducing their ability to work and serve the public. Urgent action is therefore needed to prevent and counter this phenomenon.
3. Certain categories, including women politicians and representatives of minority groups, are disproportionately targeted, including through gender-based violence, sexual threats, misogynist, homophobic or racist attacks. They therefore deserve particular attention, to ensure that they are not discouraged from participating in politics, and to safeguard the diversity and representativeness of elected officials.
4. The Assembly recalls that the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe adopted in 2023 the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, through which they committed to "ensure full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life for all, in particular for women and girls, free from violence, fear, harassment, hate speech and hate crime, as well as discrimination based on any ground" (Principle 10).
5. The Assembly also refers to the ongoing work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on "Preserving grassroots democracy – Tackling violence against local and regional elected representatives".
6. The Assembly believes that, in the framework of the New Democratic Pact for Europe, the Council of Europe could play a leading role in ensuring that violence against politicians at all levels is adequately tackled, thus strengthening democratic security across the continent.
7. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to consider establishing a mechanism, which could take the shape of a platform or an observatory of the Council of Europe, to identify and track specific threats or episodes of violence against politicians at the local, regional, and national levels.
8. The mechanism would help understand the phenomenon, and contribute to a better prevention and response by the competent authorities. It could also collect data to analyse trends, and be instrumental in raising awareness of the matter through dedicated Council of Europe public campaigns.

9. The Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to further develop early warning mechanisms to detect democratic backsliding.