



# News from the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

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Welcome to the Newsletter of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe! We issue this newsletter in order to cordially invite you to follow the debates in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe during its sessions in Strasbourg. The June part session of the PACE was particularly eventful for the ALDE. Nine times members of the Group stood before the Assembly presenting reports. The ALDE hosted a week-long side-event “North Caucasus: the victims take the floor” held in the framework of the report on “Legal remedies for human rights violations in the North Caucasus” prepared by Mr Dick Marty and Mrs Anne Brasseur. The Group exchanged views on the current political situation in Russia with Mr Boris Nemtsov, Deputy Prime Minister of Russia in 1997-1998. Finally, members of the ALDE were particularly active in the parliamentary debates on PACE resolutions and recommendations.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank “Memorial”, Committee against torture, American Committee for Peace in the Caucasus and the victims of human rights violations who attended ALDE meetings for their hard work and courage. The ALDE will closely watch the evolution of the human rights situation in the North Caucasus. The Group is also thankful to Mr Boris Nemtsov for his initiative and acute analysis of the state of democracy in Russia. Finally, we thank Mr Kirjas, Secretary General of the Liberal International, Mr Mitchell, Observer from Canada, Mr Sheerit, Observer from Israel, as well as ALDE members, who defended the values of the Group, for active participation.

*The Council of Europe is the largest pan-European institution, bringing together 47 states. Its Parliamentary Assembly meets four times a year, discussing the most important European issues related to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Members of the Assembly are – unlike members of the European Parliament – not directly elected, but they are all members of the 47 national parliaments. PACE is therefore the most important and effective network of European MPs! The ALDE Group currently brings together 97 MPs. As a group, we endeavour to be the engine of the Assembly defending core European values. Visit our website: [www.alde-pace.org](http://www.alde-pace.org)*



On June 21-23, third year in a row, the ALDE Group of the Parliamentary Assembly and the American Committee for Peace in the Caucasus, a project of Freedom House, organised a visit of Russian human rights defenders and victims from the North Caucasus to PACE to raise awareness about the dire human rights situation in the region and promote the enhanced engagement of the Parliamentary Assembly on the issue of human rights defense in the North Caucasus. The visiting group included Oleg Orlov and Ekaterina Sokirianskaia of “Memorial”, Igor Kalyapin of “Committee Against Torture”, Zurab Tsechoev, victim of human rights violations and human rights defender of the Ingush NGO “MASHR” (Peace), Denilbek Askhabov and Raisa Turlueva, victims from Chechnya, and Ella Asoyan of Freedom House.

This year the floor was given to the victims of human rights abuses in the North Caucasus: the ALDE hosted public debates, press-conferences, as well as a photo exhibition and a video projection prepared by “Memorial”. This series of events accompanied the parliamentary debate on the “Legal remedies for Human Rights Violations in the North Caucasus”.

“These are the heartbreaking stories of daily life happening in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in one of the Council of Europe member states,” said Mrs Anne Brasseur, President of ALDE, closing the hearing in the Group. The courage of the victims and human rights defenders is to be admired. “The Monitoring Committee cannot do miracles, but our duty is to pay attention and together, I hope, we will keep this item on our agenda.” Mrs Brasseur called on the co-rapporteurs on Russia to follow up and regularly report to the Monitoring Committee on the situation in the North Caucasus.

Based on the painstaking research and resolve of the Rapporteur of the Legal Affairs Committee, Mr. Dick Marty (Member of Bureau, ALDE), and Rapporteur for opinion of the Political Affairs Committee, Mrs Anne Brasseur (President, ALDE), the resolution and the recommendation, passed unanimously, were deemed by members of the PACE as “objective” and “unprecedented”.

“The small miracle consists in the fact that the report was welcomed both by human rights defenders and the Russian Delegation. This is a sign of hope and, maybe, the result of true commitment to the work on the report. We will not forget the victims and will continue to defend them; what they ask is justice”, commented Mr Marty.

Mr. Oleg Orlov, Chairman of the Human Rights Center “Memorial” welcomed the adoption of the resolution and recommendation: “Dick Marty’s report on the situation in the North Caucasus fulfilled the expectations of ‘Memorial’ and other human rights organisations. It is crucial that the report was welcomed by all national delegations and all political groups of the PACE as an objective reflection of the tragic situation in the region. It is unprecedented that the Russian Delegation shared the same position. The adopted resolution based on the report, in large thanks to the commitment of the ALDE Group, turned the challenging and laborious work of human rights defenders into a political reality, capable of protecting human rights in North Caucasus.”



**Dick Marty (Switzerland):** *Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights*

**Mrs Anne Brasseur (Luxembourg):** *Political Affairs Committee (for opinion)* ([Doc. 12301](#))

**Legal remedies for human rights violations in the North Caucasus Region** ([Doc. 12276](#))

Presented on 21 June 2010



**Mrs Nursuna Memecan (Turkey)**

**The situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe**

*Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population (for opinion)*  
([Doc. 12207](#))

Presented on 21 June 2010



**Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia in Europe** ([Doc. 12266](#))

**Mr Mike Hancock (United Kingdom):** *Political Affairs Committee (for opinion)* ([Doc. 12303](#))

**Mr Rafael Huseynov (Azerbaijan):** *Legal Affairs and Human Rights (for opinion)* ([Doc. 12305](#))

**Mrs Nursuna Memecan (Turkey):** *Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (for opinion)* ([Doc. 12304](#))

Presented on 23 June 2010



Presented by **Mrs Anne Brasseur** on 23 June 2010

**Mr Hendrik Daems (Belgium)**

**Extra-institutional actors in the democratic system** ([Doc. 12278](#))

*Political Affairs Committee*



**Mr Dick Marty (Switzerland)**

**The state of democracy in Europe and the progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure ([Doc. 12275](#) and Addendum)**

*Monitoring Committee*

Presented on 23 June 2010



**Mr Bernard Marquet (Monaco)**

**Decent pensions for women (Doc. 12274)**

*Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee (for opinion)*

Presented on 25 June 2010

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**Question to Mr Ivo Josipović, President of Croatia**



Mr BADRÉ (France) was concerned about

Croatia's co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and asked what was the opinion of the Croatian public on the fight against war crimes.



Mr JOSIPOVIĆ – I am very aware that the history of co-operation between the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and Croatia has not always been the best. Up to 2000, Croatia had a significant problem with co-operation with the the ICTY, but the later governments of Prime Ministers Račan and Sanader, and of current Prime Minister Kosor, have done everything to increase co-operation. It is also important to stress that public opinion completely changed the attitude towards international justice, and now it is normal to co-operate. Ten or 15 years ago we had significant problems with co-operation because it was considered to be “against Croatia”, but now it is widely accepted by a great majority that being part of the international justice system helps Croatia. It is easy to recognise that the good practice of the ICTY influenced our judiciary in a positive way, and that is seen by most of Croatian citizens. Prosecutors Arbour and Carla del Ponte have made statements about that increasing co-operation, with Carla del Ponte saying that co-operation is full and complete. Unfortunately, we later had problems with the artillery files, but those problems do not date from this period; those files disappeared many years ago when co-operation was not as intensive as it is today. I am completely sure that our government is doing everything to fulfil all the requirements of the ICTY and its prosecutor. I am also now included in these investigations, and I am aware that our police special task force, which has been organised by the government, is doing everything possible to fulfil all requirements.

**Question to Mr Milo Đukanović, Prime Minister of Montenegro**



Ms KEAVENEY (Ireland) – Prime Minister, you mentioned two words quite a lot there: “stability” and “history”. In that context, I wonder what priority you believe history teaching

should have within our education systems to assist in giving our students an understanding of the other within our society so that we can minimise the potential for future conflict through focusing on our similarities within and beyond politics, rather than our differences. What role can the Council of Europe play in assisting with this goal in Montenegro?



Mr ĐUKANOVIĆ said that the recent history of recurring conflicts was due to insufficient tolerance and insufficient respect for diversity. It was most important to resolve the political problems in the region. Montenegro needed the help of the international community and the Council of Europe to deal with these issues. Reform of the education system and enhancing tolerance would create the conditions for good integration.

**Question to Mr Gjorgje Ivanov, President of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"**



Ms KEAVENEY (Ireland) – In the context of open spaces and the European peace about which you talked, can you comment on the role that the arts – specifically music – and sport can have alongside

new approaches to history teaching to assist in giving our students an understanding “the other” in our societies, to minimise the potential for future conflict by focusing on our similarities within and beyond politics, rather than our differences? What role, if any, can the Council of Europe play in reaching that goal?



Mr IVANOV spoke of open spaces and the positive heritage of the Balkans. Young people operated in their own open space, the Internet. This enabled them to communicate and share music. They listened to global music and followed global trends. When in European capitals, they ate the same food and wore the same clothes. They spoke the international language, English, and were part of a universal culture. These were positive effects of globalisation and were giving rise to new identities not based on territorial boundaries. This cultural richness was welcome and would improve society. Global channels should be used to promote local values. He was very optimistic about the young generation, who were developing a global mindset. The Internet allowed people to learn facts about cultures and traditions, and to verify the facts independently. People had to be prevented from developing closed minds; open minds led to open space.



Mr MARQUET (*Monaco*) said that during his five years taking part in debates in the Chamber, successive reports on the budget had been excellent. This year, the project of the new Secretary General would mean important changes. He agreed with much of what his colleagues had said about the excellent work being done, but he felt that more could be done about communication, to give greater visibility to the work of the Council of Europe. The European Court of Human Rights needed to be protected in the coming years. States had been asked to increase their contributions but there had been reluctance to do so. [Read more, voting results](#)

### **Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee (Doc. 12292 Parts I and II + Addendum)**



Mr HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*) – How many times have we heard, “We have to remember what the core values of this place are.”? But how quickly do we forget them when somebody comes up with a pet project that they want to produce, but which is outside the guidelines of those principles? [...] I would ask the Bureau seriously to reconsider the way this whole Organisation works, and the political parties must think about how they want the future – not just of the Assembly, but of the Council of Europe – to operate. If we do not do that, the Committee of Ministers will do it for us and all we will end up doing is saying, “They did not tell us what they were going to do.” Well, let us be first this time and tell them what we want to happen. Maybe we can discuss it face to face for a

change. [Read more, voting results](#)

Tuesday 22 June 2010

### **Legal remedies for human rights violations in the North Caucasus Region (Doc. 12276)**



Mrs BECK (*Germany*) thanked Dick Marty for his honest vision. She paid tribute to a video which had shown testimony from ordinary people in a desperate situation. Men in black uniforms had searched homes and removed people. Letters to the police, the state prosecutor and even to the President seldom received replies. She recalled the deaths of Natalia Estemirova and Anna Politkovskaya, for whose killings there had been no resolution. Many years ago, people had been concerned about the plight of the mothers of the “disappeared” in Argentina, but those women were victims in our own Council of Europe area. [...] There could be no peace without justice. Islamic extremism was being combated, but trust could not be established unless the values of the Council of Europe were respected. The European Court

of Human Rights could order compensation in cases of human rights abuses, but the solution lay not in money but in implementation. [Read more, voting results](#)

### **The situation in Kosovo and the role of the Council of Europe (Doc. 12281)**

Mrs BECK (*Germany*) said that the kind of divisions which were seen in Kosovo were still present in Bosnia, which showed what problems could result from nationalism. The precarious international legal system was a direct result of a war in which the international community had been a bystander for too long. There was a danger of a repeat of the kind of atrocities that had led to the declaration of independence. The problems whereby EULEX and UNMIK were recognised differently in different parts of the country had resulted in a loss of authority for the state. The solution lay in membership of the European Union for Kosovo and Serbia, which might promote reconciliation and closure. A forward-looking approach was necessary. [Read more, voting results](#)

### **The situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe**

Mrs REPS (*Estonia*) – The question of the Roma has been discussed quite a few times in this Assembly and in many other situations at a European level as well as internationally. As the report says, there is serious economic and financial discrimination against the Roma and they lack full access to health care. We have even seen cases in which maternity wards have turned away a Gypsy woman in labour and in which medical services have advised sterilisation. In some cases, young girls and women have been offered money to accept sterilisation. That may look like a free choice, but it comes with conditions. It is surprising that these are issues today, in 2010, and we must ask again why nothing has improved. [Read more, voting results](#)

## Irregular migrants



Mrs REPS (*Estonia*) – the readmission agreement touches upon a very sensitive issue [as] greater numbers of immigrants are being shipped back to the transit countries. It is not normally the case that the countries of origin have readmission agreements. Especially now when Europe, in economic terms, has different spheres of interest, one of the conclusions that countries are reaching is that migrants, especially with irregular status, could be sent back to the transit countries. In many cases, these are the migrants whose cases might not fulfil asylum seeker or refugee status under the Geneva Convention, but who in many cases temporarily qualify on humanitarian grounds or on the principle of non-refoulement, which means that their safety would not be guaranteed if they were sent to their countries of origin. We have confirmation from these third

countries that their rights will be guaranteed, but in real terms it is a question. [Read more, voting results 1, 2](#)

Wednesday 23 June 2010

### **Islam, Islamism and Islamophobia in Europe (Doc. 12266)**



Mrs SCHUSTER (*Germany*) said that there were different views within her group and within different member states. In some states, reservations arose about Islam and its alleged links with repression, particularly the repression of women. Muslims were, however, themselves also subject to discrimination. It was necessary to get to grips with the reservations people had and to consider them critically in order to fight religious discrimination. A nuanced picture of Islam was required, if possible via the images created by the press, the churches and the Islamic organisations. The state had to act against discrimination but had, too, to foster broad cultural and educational policies that facilitated dialogue between religions. Societies also needed clear rules on, for example, resident permits and

nationalisation. [...] A burqa ban across the board would be wrong, and would simply result in woman staying at home and not participating in society. There could be some limitations, nonetheless, relating, for example, requiring the raising of the burqa when in a court of law or rules on teachers' dress, but a total ban would be wrong. Some states had tried to protect Islam against free speech but the freedom to express religious opinion was fundamental to human rights. [Read more, voting results](#)

### **The state of democracy in Europe: Extra-institutional actors in the democratic system (Doc. 12278); The political consequences of the economic crisis (Doc. 12282); Democracy in Europe: crisis and perspectives (Doc. 12279)**

Mr HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*) – This debate is interesting, as it poses a number of challenges for us. I have always been curious about what democracy is. The one thing it is not is a fixed place or a fixed thing in time – it is a continually moving feast. [...] In real democracies, that is dealt with by the fact that we have elected parliaments and elected heads of state. The problem is that, in many countries, political parties and heads of state decide to create their own special desert island where they believe that they can have absolute control and power for ever, but then still try to claim that they are a democracy. That is the challenge that we face: in this Chamber – there are 47 different variants of democracy and democratic processes, so there is no common agreement about what is best. Where it works, it can work really well, but we have to accept that things will move on. [Read more, voting results 1, 2, 3](#)

### **The state of democracy in Europe and the progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure (Doc. 12275 and Addendum)**



Mr ZERNOVSKI (*"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"*) – Mr Marty's report paints a realistic picture of the situation with regard to several delicate questions: free and fair elections based on political pluralism, the dialogue among political parties, the implementation by member states of the recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Assembly, and the demands for accession to a series of key conventions, regardless of the question whether a member state is "new" or "old". [...] That is the essential quality of the report: it is an obligation on all member states to accept and implement what we can call today a "law of the Council of Europe" contained in more than 200

conventions and documents. Such an approach eliminates so-called double standards behaviour – we have seen that in our Organisation, to be honest – and the lack of persistence with regard to those obligations. [...] By way of illustration, I will mention what is, in my opinion as a liberal democrat, the real test with regard to the question of the protection of human rights – that is, the recognition and the protection of minorities. [Read more, voting results](#)

Thursday 24 June 2010

### Debate under urgent procedure: Flare-up of tension in the Middle East

Mrs BRASSEUR (*Luxembourg*) made a comment which she believed applied to all debates at the Council of Europe but was particular pertinent to this debate. The Council should not make unilateral declarations and conflate different issues. Both sides were responsible for the current situation. [...] The blockade was incomprehensible and unjust. It denied essential food and goods to women and children; the number of people affected was three times the size of the population of Luxembourg. Politicians of all parties had failed the population by not resolving this issue. This was an inextricable conflict and therefore she supported the rapporteur's resolutions. [...] The blockade should be lifted but in a way that guaranteed Israel's security. Everyone wanted a solution to the issue, and to embark on the path towards peace. Good will alone would not achieve this, however, and the primary responsibility for a solution lay

with governments in the region. They owed it to the people, who had the right to live in peace.

[Read more, voting results](#)



### Current affairs debate: The situation in Kyrgyzstan

Mrs REPS (*Estonia*) – Thank you, Mr President. First, why are we discussing Kyrgyzstan today? Just a few months ago, we were discussing mainstreaming in the Council of Europe. Is Kyrgyzstan really in the mainstream? That is the question that many Assembly members would ask first. However, if we go into the substance of what is happening there – the humanitarian crisis, the violation of human rights and the suffering of civilians, with more than 100 000 internally displaced persons as well as those refugees who have already crossed the Uzbek border – we can conclude that we probably need to act. When it comes to questions of migration, human rights and the rule of law, we have to act. [Read more](#)

### The handling of the H1N1 pandemic: more transparency needed (Doc. 12283)

Mr MARQUET (*Monaco*) was glad that the H1N1 pandemic had been debated because, although he had great respect for the work of the World Health Organization, there had been serious problems with the management of the pandemic. [...] States had signed extensive secret contracts with laboratories. Too much secrecy had surrounded the declaration of the pandemic in June 2009, and the WHO needed to modify its guidance. There was still insufficient information about the expert panel who had determined the definition of the pandemic. [...] The lack of transparency raised wider issues, such as the increasingly technical nature of issues on which politicians were required to make decisions. [Read more, voting results](#)

### The functioning of democratic institutions in Azerbaijan (Doc. 12270)

Mr HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*) – I welcome the report and the changes that have been made. I agree with Mr Debono Grech in the sense that the Council of Europe can still work with the administration there, and we have a delegation from Azerbaijan here who really do want to make their presence in the Council of Europe felt, especially when it comes to their own country. They have a president who sat with us in this Chamber and who knows only too well the responsibilities that now fall on him to deliver the commitments that the country has made. I have no doubt that in your possible five years as rapporteur, Mr Debono Grech, we will see not just a blossoming democracy, but one that has truly flourished. [Read more, voting results](#)

Friday 25 June 2010



### Use of the Mosquito youth dispersal device (Doc. 12186)

Ms KEAVENEY (*Ireland*) – We talk a great talk about reaching out to the youth and engaging them in politics and political action, but unless we talk with them, we do not hear about the real issues that affect them. If we take time to keep ourselves young by talking with and listening to the youth, we have a responsibility to drive solutions and make others aware of the youth issues. [...] Today, we can pass a report that aims to draw attention to the existence of a weapon that

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is being used against our youngest citizens. If that is all we do, we will have achieved something in a parliamentary procedural sense that we can point out to our national and international youth forums. However, if we pass the report and individually pursue the issue within our parliaments, and if we engage with youth groups, associations and federations and prove our interest in them and their concerns, we will have served a more vital purpose this Friday morning. [Read more, voting results](#)

### Combating sexist stereotypes in the media (Doc. 12267)



Mr KAIKKONEN (*Finland*) – The media works by using what it thinks will sell the best. It often represents women in roles traditionally assigned to them by society. [...] The more that people see such images and the more they read sexist stories, the more they get used to them. Sexism and discriminatory practices become what people consider “normal”. That is not acceptable and it establishes a barrier to gender equality. [...] Freedom of speech is a good thing, but using it to promote sexist stereotypes is not acceptable. The media has a task to promote human dignity, but by producing sexist stories it produces a basis for discrimination. [...] I support the suggestion of inviting member states of the Parliamentary Assembly to promote training, education and awareness-raising action to strengthen women’s visibility in the media. Especially welcome is the European code of good practice for member states and the handbook for the media on strategies to combat gender stereotypes in the media. [Read more, voting results](#)

### Decent pensions for women (Doc. 12274)



Ms HARÐARDÓTTIR (*Iceland*) – First, I want to thank the rapporteur for a comprehensive and excellent report. The fundamental values of liberal democrats are liberty, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, tolerance and solidarity. We believe in societies that are fair, free and open in order to harness the abilities of each and every citizen. Citizens, whether they be men or women, must have the opportunity to participate in their societies to their full potential, free from poverty, ignorance and discrimination. Pension systems that do not take into consideration the difference between the genders are a hindrance to the fair, free and open society that we aim for. [Read more, voting results](#)

### Forests: the future of our planet (Doc. 12284)



Mr BUGNON (*Switzerland*) said that the main mission of the Council of Europe was the maintenance of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and the promotion of the European Convention of Human Rights in member states and elsewhere. While forests seemed marginal to this end, they were in fact very important, as, without a clean environment, it would be harder to guarantee people’s rights. The report was timely, then, given the importance of forests to the ecosystem and the development of humanity. The ALDE knew that with freedom came responsibility, and that included the responsibility to respect the environment. Forests played a vital role in maintaining natural balance through the regulation of carbon dioxide, maintaining the water balance and the working of the water cycle, and preventing the growth of deserts. [Read more, voting results](#)

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