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**International & European
Criminal Law Observatory**

ON CULTURAL ISSUES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY

MONTHLY WRAP JULY 2024

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

[S/RES/2743](#)

Resolution 2743 (2024) extends the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) to 15 July 2025, emphasizing support for the Haitian National Police (HNP) in reestablishing security. Overall, Resolution 2743 (2024) aims to address Haiti's security challenges, combat corruption and illicit financial flows, and strengthen adherence to international law through coordinated international efforts.

The resolution highlights the urgent need to address illicit financial flows enabling gang operations, emphasizing severing links between political and economic actors and gangs. It stresses the importance of restoring efficient judicial institutions and combating impunity, including support for capacity building by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Expressing grave concern about the continued flow of illicit arms and drugs, the resolution reiterates the importance of the territorial arms embargo to prevent the supply of arms and ammunition to gangs and non-state actors involved in criminal activities and human rights abuses. It urges Member States to prevent trafficking and diversion and encourages cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to combat these issues. The resolution stresses the importance of strict compliance with international law, including international human rights law, in all efforts to reestablish security. It calls for coordination among BINUH, the MSS mission, Haitian authorities, and international and regional partners to optimize support for the HNP and avoid duplication of efforts. The Security Council emphasizes its role in imposing and enforcing sanctions on individuals and entities threatening Haiti's peace, security, or stability, encouraging Member States to implement the arms embargo and cooperate in preventing illicit arms trafficking.

[S/RES/2745](#)



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The Security Council on 30 July lifted the arms embargo on the Central African Republic, also deciding that, until 31 July 2025, all Member States shall take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of arms and related materiel of all types to armed groups and associated individuals operating in that country.

Unanimously adopting resolution 2745 (2024), the Council also extended until 31 August 2025 the mandate of the Panel of Experts pursuant to the resolution and expressed intention to review its mandate and take appropriate action regarding its further extension no later than 31 July 2025.

By further terms, it requested the Panel to provide the Council a midterm report no later than 31 January 2025, a final report no later than 15 June 2025, as well as progress updates, and to devote special attention to the analysis of illicit transnational trafficking networks which continue to fund and supply armed groups in the country. The text also strongly condemned attacks and human rights abuses committed by armed groups.

[Security Council debates Gaza crisis, as civilian suffering continues unabated](#)

The UN Security Council debated the Gaza crisis, addressing severe humanitarian issues and escalating violence. Courtenay Rattray, on behalf of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, condemned Hamas attacks but also criticized Israel's collective punishment of Palestinians. He noted intensified Israeli military actions, dire conditions in Gaza, and rising violence in the West Bank, urging a humanitarian ceasefire and hostage release.

Palestinian representative Riyad Mansour accused Israel of creating a humanitarian catastrophe, emphasizing global support for Palestinian self-determination. Israeli Ambassador Gilad Erdan demanded immediate hostage release and action against Iran, blaming it for regional instability.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov criticized US policies for the violence and called for a ceasefire and humanitarian access. Representatives from Guyana and the US emphasized the urgent need for a ceasefire and ongoing diplomatic efforts to secure peace and aid.

The Council continues to seek solutions to alleviate the crisis and find a lasting resolution, stressing adherence to international law and protection of civilians.

UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON HUMAN RIGHTS

[UN rights chief calls for end to war on Ukraine following latest airstrikes](#)



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The UN human rights chief Volker Türk expressed his outrage on 9 July at Russia's latest airstrikes on Ukrainian cities which killed dozens and hit the country's biggest children's hospital in the capital Kyiv.

Mr. Türk said these "relentless" attacks were deepening the humanitarian crisis in the country, tearing apart infrastructure, and creating a host of socioeconomic challenges.

Between March and May, 436 civilians were killed and 1,760 injured, High Commissioner Türk said. "These high civilian casualties are largely the result of the ground offensive and aerial attacks, including with powerful air-dropped bombs, that took place in Kharkiv region," the rights chief said. The head of OHCHR said Russian forces had been targeting power-generating and distribution systems which has limited Ukraine's electricity capacity.

Millions of civilians experience power cuts, often for hours at a time, decreasing access to water, internet and public transportation, he said. This was impacting jobs, tax revenues and weakening social protection. Mr. Türk said OHCHR has documented a rise in pressure to obtain Russian passports in the occupied territories of Ukraine. Without Russian citizenship, many older people are reportedly experiencing difficulty accessing healthcare. For parents, they are having challenges sending their children to school without them obtaining a Russian passport. This, the rights chief said, violates international humanitarian law.

"War is the worst enemy of human rights", he said. "It has to be shunned and peace must be found in line with the UN Charter and international law."

Guatemala: UN rights chief concerned over polarization, inequality, racism

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on 19 July highlighted changes and ongoing challenges in Guatemala including corruption, racism and gender inequality.

Mr. Türk said he saw the Government's "firm commitment" to the rule of law, democracy and human rights, and that the "human rights agenda" is part of the Executive's programmes and activities.

The High Commissioner stressed the need to tackle some of the country's main problems, including high levels of inequality, gender equality and violence against women and girls.

He also expressed deep concern over the misuse of criminal law to persecute human rights defenders, justice officials, journalists, students and indigenous authorities. Dozens now "face judicial proceedings based on spurious grounds", and more than 50 have fled the country.

Mr. Türk said it was particularly regrettable that people working to stamp out corruption, or expose it, are being persecuted.



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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME (UNODC)

[Crushing the scam farms: Southeast Asia's 'criminal service providers'](#)

Transnational organised crime groups based in Southeast Asia are turning into “criminal service providers” selling a range of illegal activities, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

There has been a proliferation of illicit operations, known as scam farms, following the COVID-19 pandemic, across Southeast Asia - including in the Philippines - where they have often operated alongside legal gambling businesses.

UNODC is supporting countries across the region to cooperate more closely to fight back against the influence of criminal networks.

Many of these scam farms started as casinos tied into the regional money laundering of the proceeds from drug trafficking and other criminal activity.

But there has been a significant evolution, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which casinos have changed their business model and moved into the online space, especially scamming and cyberfraud.

They are essentially turning into criminal service providers by selling cybercrime, scamming and money laundering services, but also data harvesting and disinformation.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

[The Gambia V. Myanmar - Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#)

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has pronounced on the admissibility of statements of intervention filed in the case concerning the application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in the case of "Gambia v. Myanmar" on the issue of the question of the legal interpretation and application of the Convention.

On November 11, 2019, Gambia initiated proceedings against Myanmar invoking violations of the Genocide Convention. The Gambia's application invoked Article IX of the Convention and Article 36(1) of the ICJ Statute as the basis for the Court's jurisdiction. The ICJ confirmed its jurisdiction on



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July 22, 2022, following preliminary objections by Myanmar to the settlement of disputes between Contracting Parties relating to the application, interpretation or execution of the Convention.

In November 2023, the Maldives, together with a joint group of countries (Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), filed statements of intervention under Article 63 of the ICJ Statute but Myanmar objected to the admissibility of these interventions, prompting the ICJ to initiate written proceedings to address this objection arguing that the interventions contained impermissible issues that went beyond the interpretation of the Genocide Convention and should therefore be considered inadmissible. Instead, Gambia and the intervening States argued that the statements fell within the scope.

The ICJ considered whether the interventions complied with the requirements of Article 82 of the Rules of Court for compliance and scope and whether the declarations exceeded the permissible scope under Article 63, which allows States Parties to a Convention being interpreted by the Court to intervene in cases where their interpretation is not clear and predictable.

[Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territory 'unlawful': UN world court](#)

The UN International Court of Justice declares Israel's presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory illegal, affirming that all states are obliged not to recognize the decades-long occupation and to refrain from providing aid or assistance to maintain the situation created by Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

The Court's statement was in response to the General Assembly's request for an advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's policies and practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; the [ICJ opinion](#) is non-binding but does influence international policy.

In its advisory opinion, the ICJ concluded that Israel must put an end to its illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, cease all settlement activities and evacuate all settlers from the territory. Israel must provide reparations for damages to all natural and legal persons affected.

The ICJ underlined the obligation for international organizations, including the UN, not to recognize the legal situation arising from Israel's illegal presence and urged the General Assembly and the Security Council to consider the precise modalities and actions necessary to put an end to Israel's illegal presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory although the Israeli Foreign Ministry rejected the ICJ's opinion as fundamentally wrong, manifestly unilateral and the resolution of the conflict can only be achieved through direct negotiations.



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The General Assembly adopted a resolution in December 2022 calling on the ICJ to give its opinion under Article 96 of the UN Charter and Article 65 of the Statute of the Court for Israel's continued violation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination due to the prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of the territories occupied since 1967, as well as discriminatory measures, including those affecting the demographic composition and status of Jerusalem.

[Poland files an application for permission to intervene and a declaration of intervention in the proceedings](#) (*Ukraine v. Russian Federation*)

On 29 July 2024, Poland filed an application with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) seeking to intervene in the case between Ukraine and the Russian Federation concerning allegations of genocide under the 1948 Genocide Convention. Poland seeks permission to intervene based on Articles 62 and 63 of the ICJ Statute, which allow states with a legal interest potentially affected by a case to participate.

Poland argues that, as a party to the Genocide Convention, it has a significant legal interest in ensuring the Convention's correct application. Since 2014, Poland has provided extensive support to Ukraine, and the genocide accusations against Ukraine could affect Poland's legal position. Poland aims to expand its intervention scope compared to its initial involvement in 2022, following the ICJ's ruling on preliminary objections earlier this year. The case was initiated by Ukraine on 26 February 2022, following Russia's claims that genocide had occurred in Ukraine's Luhansk and Donetsk regions, which Russia used to justify its military actions. Ukraine denies these allegations and argues that Russia's military actions are unjustified. Poland focuses its intervention on specific articles of the Genocide Convention that relate to the prevention and punishment of genocide, expressing concern that the case's outcome could impact its legal obligations under the Convention. The ICJ has requested Ukraine and Russia to provide written observations on Poland's intervention request. This case underscores the broader geopolitical tensions and legal complexities surrounding the conflict, with Poland's intervention highlighting the international community's vested interest in the proceedings.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

[17 July: ICC marks Day of International Criminal Justice](#)



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On this day 26 years ago, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) was officially adopted. This international treaty created the world's first and only international criminal court to try individuals for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression. 124 countries are States Parties to the ICC Rome Statute. The President of the ICC, Judge Tomoko Akane, noted on this occasion that on the International Criminal Justice Day, it is important to remember why the ICC was created and how essential it is that the Court can fully carry out its mandate without external pressure. Through the work of the Court, impunity for the most serious crimes is fought and with every case that is judged, one step forward towards the construction of a more just world. As an independent and impartial judicial body, the ICC plays a crucial role in strengthening the rule of law at international level.

[ICC holds Sixth Asia Pacific Forum of The Hague](#)

On 19 July 2024, the International Criminal Court hosted the 6th Asia Pacific Forum in The Hague. The webinar was attended by the President of the Court, Judge Tomoko Akane, ICC judges Keebong Paek and Erdenebalsuren Damdin, Deputy ICC Prosecutor Nazhat Shameem Khan and other representatives and advisors of the ICC from the Asia-Pacific region to promote awareness of the Court in the Asia-Pacific region.

The event included a high-level dialogue with ICC judges and the Deputy Prosecutor on "Justice across borders: the role of the ICC in the Asia-Pacific area", a round table on "Inside the courtroom: promoting international justice through different roles of parties", followed by a briefing session of the Court's human resources on career opportunities "Working for international justice".

President Tomoko Akane stressed the importance of platforms such as the Asia Pacific Forum and said that diversity in staff is crucial to strengthening the ICC as an institution and increase its credibility. As the law that applies reflects the main legal systems around the world, it is therefore essential to have lawyers with different legal backgrounds working together with the Court.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMES

[Historic decision: Argentine Court of Cassation quashes judge's decision not to open case against Uyghurs for crimes against humanity and genocide](#)



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On 11 July 2024, the Argentine Federal Court of Criminal Cassation issued its judgment in relation to a criminal complaint filed by Uyghur Human Rights Project, World Uyghur Congress and Lawyers for Uyghur Rights for genocide and crimes against humanity. The Court of Cassation held that the Buenos Aires Court of Appeal had erred in agreeing with the Prosecutor's decision to dismiss the complaint and ordered the Prosecutor to open an investigation. The result of the judgment is that the court of first instance will have to open the case and that the Court will be in the preliminary phase of the proceedings. This is a revolutionary moment for the Uyghurs, who are now closer to obtaining justice for international crimes committed against their people by agents of the Chinese state, in the context of the systematic repression of the Turkish people in the Uyghur region. In addition to overturning the Court of Appeals' decision to allow the prosecutor to dismiss the case, The Court of Cassation also overturned their decision not to grant victims the status of civil party. Once the case is opened by the Court of First Instance, it will enter into the investigation phase, in which victims will be called to testify. This would mark a historic opportunity for the Uyghur people and would be the first time that evidence of atrocities committed against Uyghurs is heard in front of a criminal court.

OSCE

[Stronger action to identify victims and protect the most vulnerable needed, say OSCE leaders on world anti-trafficking day](#)

OSCE leaders, on the occasion of World Anti-Trafficking Day, say stronger action and collaborative efforts are needed to identify victims and protect the most vulnerable. "Proactively identifying and protecting victims is critical," said OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Kari Johnstone. "Victims of trafficking who are coerced into committing crimes are too often mistakenly prosecuted as criminals rather than being recognized as victims themselves. It is a grave injustice to mistake the victim for the criminal. Let's stop punishing trafficking victims. Our laws must include a clear, mandatory non-punishment principle for trafficking victims, applicable to all related crimes and to all victims, including children." The OSCE's anti-trafficking efforts, led by the Office of the Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, draw on the expertise of the OSCE Secretariat, the ODIHR and field operations to develop and refine national and regional anti-trafficking responses to protection, prevention and prosecution. Recognising the importance of ethical inclusion of survivors in all anti-



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trafficking efforts, the ODIHR published a "Guidance on establishing and maintaining National Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Councils". This guide outlines practical tools and recommended standards for establishing advisory bodies of survivors of trafficking experiences, ensuring that their expertise and proposals are integrated into the government's anti-trafficking policy.

[Escalating attacks in Ukraine are increasing civilian casualties, while evidence of torture mounts, OSCE human rights office says](#)

The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in its latest report on violations of international law following Russia's military attack in Ukraine said that in recent months, the Russian Federation's intensified large-scale attacks on Ukrainian cities have resulted in an increasing number of civilian casualties and severe damage to civilian infrastructure, while evidence of widespread and systematic torture of detained civilians and prisoners of war in Russian-controlled areas is growing. The ODIHR has been monitoring the human rights situation in Ukraine since the Russian military attack on 24 February 2022. Each report contains a series of recommendations calling on both sides in the conflict to respect and ensure compliance with international law. This latest report focuses on specific issues reported by 87 witnesses to ODIHR during in-depth interviews, together with the results of research conducted through remote monitoring, as well as information provided by the Russian Federation and Ukraine and civil society. This report is further confirmation of the general disregard by the military forces of the Russian Federation for the fundamental principles laid down in the laws of war, resulting in rights violations that may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. The ODIHR has also received much more limited but nevertheless worrying indications of violations by the Ukrainian armed forces. ODIHR collected further evidence of widespread and systematic torture in detention, including sexual torture against detainees, as well as cases of rape and threats of rape. Many survivors reported to ODIHR that they continue to suffer long-term physical injuries and psychological trauma as a result of their experiences. All OSCE states stressed the vital importance of complying with their legally binding obligations under international treaties, including the Geneva Conventions. Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment are prohibited worldwide, and every OSCE country has recognised that no circumstance is ever a justification. Furthermore, all parties to an armed conflict must act in line with international humanitarian and human rights law, which explicitly prohibits indiscriminate attacks on civilians and protects civilians at all times from violence and inhuman treatment.



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[OSCE PCUz supports collective efforts to combat human trafficking](#)

On July 29, 2024, Ambassador Antti Karttunen, OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan, attended the conference "Combating Human Trafficking: National Approaches and International Standards" in Tashkent. Organized by Uzbekistan's National Commission on the Issues of Combating Human Trafficking and Decent Work, along with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Central Asia, the event marked World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. Ambassador Karttunen highlighted the ongoing efforts and challenges in combating human trafficking. Conference participants examined Uzbekistan's anti-trafficking practices and discussed international standards, as well as strategies for rehabilitating and reintegrating victims. Karttunen presented a video simulation exercise for law enforcement, created by the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan in 2022, demonstrating human trafficking scenarios enacted by actors from Tashkent's Ilkhom Theatre. Key speakers included Senator Ravshanbek Alimov, Minister of Internal Affairs Pulat Bobojonov, and Zeynal Hajiyev, Sub-Regional Coordinator of the IOM for Central Asia.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

[MONEYVAL acknowledges Jersey's progress in combatting money laundering and financing of terrorism](#)

The Council of Europe's anti-money laundering body conducted a comprehensive assessment of the country's level of compliance with the international standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and in a new report commended the UK Crown Dependency of Jersey for taking steps to strengthen its regulatory and legal framework to combat money laundering (ML), financing of terrorism (FT) and financing of proliferation (FP). It also called on the jurisdiction to further strengthen the practical application of its frameworks for ML investigations and prosecutions, as well as the enforcement of AML/CFT preventive measures sanctions. Jersey is expected to report to MONEYVAL as part of its regular follow-up reporting process in December 2026.

[PACE committee, setting out new ways to tackle migrant smuggling, proposes a Council of Europe instrument](#)

A PACE committee called for a two-pronged approach to counter migrant smuggling, focusing on international cooperation to ensure safe and legal migration routes and protect the rights of people on



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the move, while cracking down on cross-border criminal groups. Assembly's Migration Committee said there was "a lack of consistency" in national laws against human trafficking and called for a new Council of Europe instrument to complement the UN's Palermo Protocol, which would follow its definition of trafficking, specify that migrants are not themselves trafficking and clarify that this crime necessarily implies that the trafficker 'derives material or immaterial profit'. Meanwhile, MEPs said that a proposal for a regulation to improve police cooperation is premature and could lead to 'conflicting standards' in EU member states.

[Anti-torture Committee again calls on Greece to reform its immigration detention system and stop pushbacks](#)

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) published a report on its visit to Greece (21 November - 1 December 2023), urging the Greek authorities to improve conditions in immigration detention facilities, particularly in the newly-built EU-funded centres on the Aegean islands. The CPT highlighted the need for dignified and humane treatment of foreign nationals.

The visit aimed to assess the treatment of foreign nationals in pre-removal detention centres, police and border guard stations, and the new Closed Controlled Access Centres on Lesbos, Kos, and Samos. The CPT received credible allegations of physical ill-treatment by police in Athens and pre-removal centres in Amygdaleza, Corinth, and Tavros.

Foreign nationals were found to be held in poor conditions, particularly in police stations unsuitable for stays exceeding 24 hours. The new Closed Controlled Access Centres were criticized for not meeting basic reception and protection needs, with detainees held beyond legal time limits and lacking legal safeguards like access to lawyers and interpreters. Conditions in Kos and Samos were described as inhuman and degrading.

The excessive security measures, including barbed wire, made these centres inappropriate for children and vulnerable individuals. The CPT also reported consistent allegations of violent, informal removals (pushbacks) of foreign nationals to Türkiye, ignoring individual circumstances and protection needs.

In response, Greek authorities claimed that detention conditions met international standards and announced planned renovations for three detention centres.

[Poland: all laws and practices related to the situation on the Belarus border should comply with human rights standards](#)



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The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O'Flaherty, has raised significant concerns in two letters addressed to Polish leaders regarding human rights issues at the Poland-Belarus border.

In his letter to the Prime Minister of Poland, the Commissioner highlighted reports of ongoing summary returns of individuals across the border, which violate Poland's obligations under international human rights law. He also expressed concerns about the human rights implications of the buffer zone established along parts of the border. The Commissioner urged the Polish government to ensure that all border-related laws and practices align with the human rights standards set by the Council of Europe.

In a separate letter to the Marshal of the Senate, O'Flaherty addressed a proposed bill that would exempt certain state agents from criminal liability if they use force or firearms in violation of existing rules, provided they act in urgent situations. The Commissioner warned that this bill could discourage border agents from adhering to rules on the proportionality of force and firearms use, potentially undermining accountability and human rights commitments. He urged the Senate not to adopt the bill in its current form, warning that, along with the buffer zone, it could reduce public scrutiny and accountability of security forces.

O'Flaherty acknowledged the complexities of managing migration and security at the border but emphasized that national security concerns should not override human rights obligations. He urged Polish authorities to uphold human rights standards in their border management practices.

[Trafficking of Ukrainian children including for sexual and labour exploitation: risks in spotlight](#)

The Council of Europe Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU) held a special hearing during its 3rd plenary session to address the heightened risks of human trafficking, including sexual and labor exploitation, faced by Ukrainian children displaced by Russia's war of aggression. Experts highlighted that crises, especially armed conflicts, increase children's vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation. Benoît van Keirsbilck emphasized the need for vigilance and comprehensive support for these children, while Petya Nestorova of GRETA stressed the importance of informing and empowering children to recognize and avoid trafficking risks. The hearing called for increased awareness and protective measures for Ukrainian children in Council of Europe member states.

EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS



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[Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye \(Application no. 15669/20\)](#)

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has notified the Turkish Government of another 1,000 applications concerning convictions for terrorism offenses based on the use of the ByLock messaging application. This is the third batch, following notifications of 2,000 applications in December 2023 and April 2024, bringing the total to 3,000.

These cases relate to convictions for membership in the FETÖ/PDY, considered by Turkish authorities to be responsible for the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016. The convictions were primarily based on the use of ByLock, which Turkish courts deemed an exclusive communication tool for FETÖ/PDY members. The applicants argue their convictions violate Article 7 (no punishment without law) and Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair trial) of the European Convention on Human Rights. These core issues were previously judged in the Grand Chamber case *Yüksel Yalçinkaya v. Türkiye*. The ECHR has not put any questions to the parties or required observations for these new applications but allows the Turkish Government to submit observations on factual aspects only. The applicants are 1,000 Turkish nationals who filed their applications between 2019 and 2023.

[Relinquishment in favour of the Grand Chamber in the case *H.M.M. and Others v. Latvia*](#)

The European Court of Human Rights has transferred the case *H.M.M. and Others v. Latvia* (application no. 42165/21) to the Grand Chamber. This case involves alleged "pushbacks" at the Latvian-Belarusian border starting on 10 August 2021 and over 30 similar cases are pending concerning the Belarusian borders involving Lithuania, Latvia and Poland from spring 2021 to summer 2023.

On 10 August 2021, 26 Iraqi nationals of Kurdish origin, all but one removed to Iraq by Latvian authorities crossed from Belarus to Latvia but were pushed back without asylum review, leaving them stranded for two weeks. Eleven entered Latvia on 20 August 2021, with others following between 26 October 2021 and 23 March 2022. They were detained in Daugavpils and later removed to Iraq between November 2021 and April 2022.

The applicants allege frequent pushbacks, deprivation of basic needs, and mistreatment including beatings and destruction of personal belongings. They cite violations of Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment), Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 (prohibition of collective expulsion of aliens), Article 13 (right to an effective remedy), and Article 5 §§ 1 and 4 (right to liberty and security) of the European Convention on Human Rights regarding their detention.



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The application was lodged on 20 August 2021, and the Latvian Government was notified on 3 May 2022 and the case was transferred to the Grand Chamber on 2 July 2024.

[*B.A. v. Cyprus \(Application no. 24607/20\)*](#)

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled in the case of a Syrian national, B.A., who challenged the lawfulness of his detention in Cyprus on national security grounds, in the absence of proper judicial review in due process.

B.A., born in 1996, entered the occupied areas of Cyprus from Turkey on January 28, 2019 and applied for international protection at the Ledras Palace crossing point in Nicosia on February 8, 2019. B.A. and his relatives were transferred to Pournara Emergency Reception Center; B.A. was detained on national security grounds under section 9 of the Refugee Law.

On April 22, 2019, the Asylum Service interviewed B.A. and subsequently rejected his application for international protection, citing his involvement in war crimes.

B.A. appealed the detention order, including habeas corpus petitions and appealed to the Supreme Court of Cyprus without relief, with the Supreme Court maintaining the detention, noting B.A.'s national security concerns and danger.

The judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) had as its legal basis both Article 5 § 1 (Right to liberty and security) finding that B.A.'s detention was not sufficiently connected to the purpose of preventing unauthorized entry and was arbitrarily extended because the detention exceeded a reasonable duration without proper justification and Article 5 § 4 (Right to prompt review of detention) noting the absence of prompt judicial control of B.A.'s detention, violating his rights under the Convention. The domestic courts did not provide a timely control of the lawfulness of his detention. The ECHR concluded that B.A.'s detention for more than two years and nine months was arbitrary in violation of Articles 5 § 1 and 5 § 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights and emphasized the need for a lawful basis for detention and timely judicial control to protect individual liberty and security.

[*Sahraoui and Others v. France \(Application no. 35402/20\)*](#)

The case of Sahraoui and Others v. France was referred to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) under Article 2 (right to life) of the European Convention on Human Rights; the case



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involves the death of Mr. S.T., a drug-addicted inmate at the Nevers remand prison, from poly-drug poisoning due to an overdose of prescribed and over-the-counter medication.

Ms. Sahraoui lodged a preliminary claim with the Ministry of Justice which was rejected, arguing that the prison authorities had failed in their duty to monitor and care for Mr. S.T., given his addiction and medical treatment; the claim is subsequently rejected by the Administrative Tribunal of Dijon on the reason that the prescription and administration of the drugs are under medical, not prison, authority. The appeal to the Lyon Court of Appeal upheld the lower court's decision, indicating no fault in the supervision of Mr. S.T. by the prison authorities; an appeal was subsequently lodged with the Conseil d'État, which also rejected the appeal, finding no legal basis in the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Prison Code to annul the previous decisions.

The ECHR reiterated that the State must not only refrain from intentional and unlawful acts that cause death, but also take the necessary measures to protect lives, an obligation that extends to providing adequate medical care to prisoners, particularly those with drug addiction, where the underlying medical conditions contributed to the fatal outcome. The Court concluded that the French authorities had not breached their positive obligation to protect Mr. S.T.'s life, as the measures taken were considered sufficient in the circumstances and in view of his vulnerabilities.

[Djeri and Others v. Latvia \(Applications nos. 50942/20 and 2022/21\)](#)

The case was referred to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) on the basis of Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) in conjunction with Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 (right to education) of the European Convention on Human Rights and states that the 2018 amendments to Latvian legislation, referred to by the Latvian Constitutional Court, increase the use of Latvian in all pre-schools, public and private, which reduce the use of Russian language which restricts the right to education by discriminating against Russian-speaking pupils.

The ECHR examined the complaints under Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), Article 2 (right to education) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) finding the complaints inadmissible as the remedies had not been exhausted, Latvian is the official language, the measures have no negative impact on the ability to receive education and were considered proportionate to prepare children for primary education.

The ECHR emphasized the importance of early learning in the native language and the wider freedom of the state in pre-school education, the use of Latvian was considered to be in line with legitimate, proportionate and non-discriminatory objectives. The Court concluded that Latvia had not violated



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Article 14 and Article 2 of Protocol No. 1, as the measures were adequate to maintain the education system in the official language while preserving minority languages and cultures, also the complaints of discrimination against Russian-speaking children with special needs were found unfounded.

INTERPOL

[85 arrests, 6,400 objects recovered in international operation against art trafficking](#)

The eighth edition of an Operation Pandora saw customs and police authorities from 25 countries join forces against international art trafficking. During the operation, several thousand checks were carried out at airports, ports and border crossings, as well as at auction houses, museums and private residences. Law enforcement officers also patrolled the web and conducted 6,000 online checks. Led by the Spanish Guardia Civil, with the support of Europol and INTERPOL, the operation resulted in 85 arrests and the recovery of more than 6,400 cultural goods. INTERPOL supported Pandora VIII by facilitating the exchange of information between the participating countries, in particular with the Balkan countries. A dedicated agent was also available during the operation to check seizures at the front line against INTERPOL's Stolen Works of Art Database and support field officers in using the ID-Art mobile application. As a co-leader of the operation, Europol played a key role by facilitating information exchange and providing analytical and operational support to the individual national investigations.

[Record seizures in INTERPOL operation against drug trafficking](#)

Operation Lionfish Hurricane, coordinated by INTERPOL, led to the seizure of over 615 tonnes of illicit drugs and precursor chemicals across 31 countries, with an estimated value of USD 1.6 billion. The operation resulted in 206 arrests, targeting drug trafficking networks that span South America, Africa, and Europe, highlighting the growth of transnational organized crime groups. Key seizures included 505 tonnes of precursor chemicals used for drug manufacturing and explosives, more than 56 tonnes of cocaine, and 52 tonnes of other drugs such as marijuana, ketamine, and tramadol. Significant discoveries included a semi-submersible 'narco-sub' in the Guyanese jungle, capable of transporting up to 3 tonnes of cocaine across the Atlantic. Brazilian authorities dismantled a drug mule ring, arresting 17 individuals, including one who ingested 120 cocaine packages. Seizures across South America included 30,000 commercial-grade detonators, 280 firearms, and grenades.



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Colombian police confiscated 2.1 tonnes of hydrochloric acid and destroyed a sulfuric acid production facility in the jungle, both critical for cocaine production and explosives. In Ghana, authorities dismantled a postal drug trafficking ring, seizing 18.8 kg of marijuana bound for the UK. Additionally, cocaine hydrochloride, a common form of cocaine, was seized in Antwerp and Senegal, amounting to over 7.1 tonnes. The operation also led to the interception of 65 stolen vehicles in South America and West Africa, including a car recovered in Benin four months after being stolen in Canada. INTERPOL's efforts underline the intricate connections between various crime forms and emphasize the need for a collaborative approach. The operation is part of INTERPOL's I-RAID program, focusing on combating drug trafficking through multidisciplinary support, analysis, and partnerships. Since 2013, Lionfish operations have resulted in seizures worth USD 3.6 billion and 5,617 arrests in 108 countries, showcasing the scale and reach of organized crime networks.

[INTERPOL operation strikes major blow against West African financial crime](#)

Operation Jackal III, a global law enforcement effort led by INTERPOL targeting West African organized crime groups like Black Axe, resulted in around 300 arrests, the identification of over 400 suspects, and the seizure of assets worth USD 3 million across 21 countries from April 10 to July 3. The operation, which involved extensive international collaboration, tackled crimes such as online financial fraud, human trafficking, and drug smuggling. Highlights include the dismantling of a Nigerian-led criminal network in Argentina, which involved the seizure of USD 1.2 million in counterfeit banknotes, and significant actions in Switzerland and Portugal against similar syndicates. This operation underscored the increasing prevalence of financial fraud originating from West Africa and demonstrated the critical importance of global cooperation in combating these sophisticated criminal networks.

EUROPOL

[Police detain 13 in raids across Europe targeting Italian organised crime](#)

An operation across Europe led by the Italian Carabinieri and supported by Europol has resulted in the arrest of 13 individuals believed to be linked to Italian organised crime. The investigation was coordinated by Europol and Eurojust and follows a large-scale drug trafficking and money laundering investigation. In the early hours of 2 July, police authorities from Italy, Spain, Germany, Belgium and



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Ukraine raided 13 properties. Seven suspects were arrested in Italy, three in Spain, one in Belgium, one in Germany and one in Ukraine. Europol has been actively supporting the case since October 2022, bringing together investigators from across Europe to agree on a joint investigation strategy and prepare the final phase of the action. The agency provided continuous intelligence development and analysis to support national investigations. During the day of action, a Europol expert was sent to Italy to assist national authorities in law enforcement and to facilitate real-time tactical cooperation between the countries involved.

[Interconnected and digital: how migrant smugglers and human traffickers operate](#)

In 2015, the European Union was confronted with an unprecedented migratory crisis. Migrant smuggling and human trafficking networks are highly adaptable and exploit geopolitical events, including economic and social crises, to maximise their illicit profits. These networks quickly identify criminal opportunities offered by the digital environment and take advantage of them to increase their illicit proceeds. In response, in 2016, Europol increased its support to national law enforcement authorities with the creation of a dedicated hub, the Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre, to facilitate closer cross-border cooperation and the rapid exchange of operational information. The new report by Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre (EMSC) examines the latest developments and key threats to migrant smuggling and human trafficking, highlights the main challenges presented by the current crime landscape and aims to help law enforcement agencies step up the fight against criminal networks, which not only rob individuals of their dignity, but also directly threaten people's lives. In April 2024, Europol hosted the conference 'Tackling Migrant Smuggling in the Digital Domain' under the auspices of the European Commission's Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling initiative. During this event, over 100 experts from EU Member States, third countries, agencies and international organisations met to discuss the challenges and possible responses to migrant smuggling made possible by the use of online platforms. The conference also promoted the exchange of good practices and difficulties in investigating the digital dimension of migrant smuggling, with the aim of strengthening EU instruments in the fight against this criminal threat.

[Fragmented and multiplied cybercriminal landscape, warns new Europol report](#)



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Europol publishes the 10th edition of the Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment (IOCTA), an in-depth assessment of the key developments, changes and emerging threats in cybercrime over the last year. The report highlights relevant trends in crime areas such as cyber-attacks, child sexual exploitation and online and payment fraud, providing an outlook of what can be expected in the near future, particularly with regard to new technologies, payment systems, artificial intelligence, cryptocurrencies and illicit content online. To quickly and effectively address the main threats highlighted in IOCTA 2024, law enforcement agencies need the right knowledge, tools and legislation in place. While criminals adapt, law enforcement and regulators must also innovate to stay ahead of the curve and seek to capitalise on new and developing technologies. This in turn requires training to produce the specialised skills required to investigate technically challenging or complex cybercrimes, such as those involving cryptocurrency abuse or the dark web. Europol is addressing these digital challenges with its Delivering Security in Partnership strategy. The agency is at the forefront of law enforcement innovation and serves as a knowledge platform for the delivery of EU policing solutions in relation to cryptography, cryptocurrency and other issues. In doing so, Europol expands the toolbox available to law enforcement officers across Europe and beyond, increasing their technical and forensic capabilities. The European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) at Europol is the first port of call for cybercrime investigators.

[Nine members of high-risk drug trafficking organisations arrested in Montenegro](#)

Montenegrin authorities recently arrested nine High Value Targets involved in Western Balkan drug trafficking organizations. In total, 19 individuals were targeted, with four charged while in prison and five still at large. This operation resulted from collaborative investigations and information exchange through Europol, involving the Australian Federal Police, New South Wales Police, Montenegrin Special Police Division, and the US DEA. The investigation began after intercepting 1.8 tonnes of cocaine shipments from Europe to Australia between 2020 and 2021.

The suspects are linked to Montenegrin criminal cells within a larger Balkan drug trafficking network. Some belong to notorious Montenegrin clans, while others lead independent groups. One suspect, a gang leader, is implicated in multiple murders. These individuals were previously known to law enforcement and played key roles in drug trafficking logistics from the EU to Australia, supplying and transporting cocaine from source countries for distribution in European and Australian markets. The operation on 17 July 2024 involved searching 15 locations in Montenegro, resulting in nine arrests and seizures of documents, firearms, ammunition, vehicles, vessels, luxury watches, and cash.



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Western Balkan criminal networks have increasingly targeted the Australian drug market due to higher profits compared to European markets. Cocaine routes include Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil, with transshipments via Southern Europe and Africa to Australia, where the price of cocaine can exceed EUR 100,000 per kilo.

Europol supported the investigation with information exchange, analytical assistance, and case coordination among various agencies in the EU and beyond.

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

[Council Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2024/2008 of 22 July 2024 implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2020/1998 concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses](#)

The Council of the European Union, under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Council Regulation (EU) 2020/1998, proposes amendments to address serious human rights violations and abuses. The regulation is based on the following key points. **Commitment to Human Rights:** On 8 December 2020, the EU and its Member States reaffirmed their dedication to promoting and protecting human rights globally through the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, emphasizing the Union's strategic goal of ensuring human rights for everyone. **Concerns Over Violence:** The Council, in its conclusions of 14 November 2022, highlighted the severe impact of armed conflicts on women and girls and the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence. It committed to enhanced efforts to counter such violence and ensure accountability. Earlier, in June 2014, the Council had stressed the need for coordinated policies to combat violence against women. **Restrictive Measures:** To reinforce these efforts, the regulation proposes adding four persons and two entities to the list of those subject to restrictive measures as set out in Annex I to Regulation (EU) 2020/1998. **Amendment to Regulation:** Consequently, Regulation (EU) 2020/1998 will be amended accordingly. The amended regulation will take effect upon its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

[Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2024/2026 of 22 July 2024 amending Decision 2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine](#)

The Council of the European Union, based on the Treaty on European Union and a proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, has amended Decision



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2014/512/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Russia due to its actions destabilizing Ukraine. The European Council, on 27 June 2024, reiterated its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and condemned Russia's intensified attacks on civilians and infrastructure. Given the ongoing violations of international law by Russia, the Council has decided to renew the restrictive measures for an additional six months, extending their application until 31 January 2025. This decision will take effect the day after its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

[Council Decision \(EU\) 2024/2045 of 22 July 2024 on the position to be taken on behalf of the Union within the Council of Europe bodies as regards the status of the European Union in the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register of Damage caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine](#)

The Council of the European Union has decided to change the EU's status within the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register of Damage caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine from Associate Member to Participant. This follows the UN's recognition of the need for an international reparation mechanism and the Council of Europe's establishment of the Register to document damage caused by Russia in Ukraine. The EU, which joined as a founding Associate Member in May 2023, seeks full Participant status to ensure Russia is held accountable for its actions and to enjoy full rights within the Register. This change is without prejudice to the Member States' competence and future EU foreign policy decisions. The decision also includes an annual contribution to the Register, as per Regulation (EU) 2024/792, and will take effect upon adoption.

[Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2024/1970 of 15 July 2024 amending Decision \(CFSP\) 2023/1532 concerning restrictive measures in view of Iran's military support to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and to armed groups and entities in the Middle East and the Red Sea region](#)

The Council of the European Union has adopted a decision to amend Decision (CFSP) 2023/1532 concerning restrictive measures related to Iran's military support to Russia's war against Ukraine and to armed groups in the Middle East and the Red Sea region. This amendment renews the restrictive measures until 27 July 2025 and updates entries concerning four persons and two entities. It also clarifies the derogation process under Article 3(8), ensuring that if there is no negative decision, request for information, or notification within five working days of a request for authorization, the authorization is considered granted. Additionally, Member States must inform others and the



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Commission of any granted authorizations within two weeks. The prohibitions will not apply until 27 October 2023 for obligations from contracts concluded before 26 July 2023. The decision is under constant review and will be renewed or amended as necessary. This decision takes effect the day after its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

[Sanctions against terrorism: Council renews the EU Terrorist List and designates a new entity](#)

The Council of the European Union has added "The Base," a right-wing extremist organization founded by Rinaldo Nazzaro in 2018, to the EU Terrorist List, subjecting it to asset freezes and prohibiting EU operators from providing funds. The list of persons, groups, and entities subject to anti-terrorism sanctions has been renewed, delisting one deceased individual and maintaining the rest, resulting in 15 persons and 22 groups/entities currently under sanctions. These legal acts are published in the Official Journal of the European Union. This EU sanctions regime is distinct from the UN Security Council's measures against Al-Qaida and ISIL/Da'esh, though the EU may impose additional autonomous sanctions on these groups.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

[Newly elected Parliament reaffirms its strong support for Ukraine](#)

Parliament reconfirmed its view that the EU must continue to support Kyiv for as long as it takes until victory. The resolution, which sets out the newly elected European Parliament's first official position on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, restates the continued support of MEPs for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. While restating their firm conviction that Russia must compensate financially for the destruction it has caused in Ukraine, Parliament further welcomes the outcome of the recent NATO summit and reaffirms its stance that Ukraine is on an irreversible path to NATO membership. MEPs call on the EU and member states to increase their military support for Ukraine for as long as necessary and in whatever form necessary. They also call on the European Commission to propose long-term financial assistance for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

EPP



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[Italy: EPPO seizes assets in €1.3 million fraud and money laundering investigation](#)

At the request of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Naples (Italy), the *Guardia di Finanza* executed a freezing order for an amount of 1,3 million euros against four companies and their legal representatives, suspected of fraud, embezzlement and money laundering. The company in question is a company based in Naples which apparently operates in the field of administrative advice, which successfully applied for two projects financed by EU funds in 2022. One of the projects involved a €300,000 loan for "developing e-commerce for SMEs in foreign countries", of which €150,000 was provided. The other was a grant of € 1.3 million for SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises), which was almost entirely disbursed and financed by the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). Based on the evidence, the company, with no place of operation, employees and user contracts, submitted falsified financial statements for 2019 and 2020 to guarantee the loan of € 300,000. It is understood that for the grant of € 1.3 million, the same company, with the assistance of an auditor, submitted completely fictitious data to the paying agency. These documents were intended to simulate transactions abroad, a prerequisite for financing. According to the survey, following the funds' crediting, the company transferred the full amount to three companies in Italy and to bank accounts in Belgium, Bulgaria, Lithuania and the UK. It is alleged that the legal representatives of the beneficiary companies were aware of the illicit origin of the funds and intended to hinder their traceability, As demonstrated by the absence of business relations between the companies. At the request of the EPPO, the preliminary investigation judge in Rome ordered the seizure of assets for an amount of 1.3 million euro, based on evidence collected.

[Romania: four members of a criminal group with ties to the mafia accused of fraud for 4.3 million euros](#)

The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Bucharest (Romania) has indicted four suspects, who are believed to be part of a criminal organisation linked to Italian mafia groups, The European Commission has been working with EU and national funds to investigate a subsidy fraud involving €4.3 million. The defendants are alleged to have formed a criminal group with other suspects in order to provide false letters of assurance to beneficiaries of projects financed by EU funds, The Commission has been working on a number of proposals. In exchange for the issuance of letters, it is believed that the suspects have raised large sums of money. It is believed that they have carried out this fraud in the name of companies registered in the Czech Republic and Latvia, who were not



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entitled to issue letters of guarantee or financial resources to cover the insured damages. The use of these documents is estimated to have resulted in an illicit gain of around EUR 4.3 million, most of which came from the European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Regional Operational Programme. These indictments are the result of several investigations into criminal schemes using the same modus operandi, following house searches in Romania and France in May 2023. Previously, in 2023, other suspects had been charged and are currently awaiting trial. Previously, assets worth €450,000 had been seized. If found guilty, the accused face a prison sentence of between four and fifteen years. On the basis of the principle of loyal cooperation, the EPPO has alerted the Romanian Ministry for Investment and European Projects to possible vulnerabilities in the management of European funds, which result in a significantly reduced level of protection of the EU's financial interests in Romania. Depending on the types identified in different cases, the elements that created a high risk of fraud in contracts with European funding were the use of letters of guarantee issued by fictitious entities or which did not have the right to issue such documents. As a result, a number of public proceedings were won on the basis of those forged documents and several investigations were opened by the EPPO.

EUROJUST

[One year after the establishment of the International Center for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine \(ICPA\)](#)

One year ago, Eurojust presented the International Centre for the Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression (ICPA), a single judicial coordination platform dedicated to supporting national investigations into war-related crime of aggression in Ukraine. Since its launch in July 2023, the ICPA has made significant progress in building a common investigative and prosecution strategy for assault cases. ICPA participants have selected relevant evidence to focus on and have coordinated and strengthened ongoing investigative efforts at the national level. The President of Eurojust, Ladislav Hamran, said: «One year after its establishment, ICPA has firmly established itself as a cornerstone in the accountability landscape. The fight against impunity deserves our unwavering attention and it is essential that it extends to one of the pillars of the modern rule-based international order: The prohibition of the use of force. Eurojust shall support the ICPA for as long as necessary. The ICPA's prosecutors and independent investigators from different countries have been working



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together regularly at Eurojust, benefiting from the dedicated team of legal experts of the Agency and the customized technical, logistical and financial support. » This has enabled them to exchange information and evidence quickly and efficiently, and to coordinate a common investigation and prosecution strategy. The unique nature of the centre and its multinational composition have enabled it to draw on the expertise and services of a wide range of national authorities in its work.

[Important step against organised crime: Eurojust signs working agreements with five Latin American countries](#)

To combat the growing threat of criminal activity at global level, Eurojust has signed Working Agreements with the Public Prosecutor's Offices of Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Peru. The new arrangements will make strategic cooperation between these authorities and Eurojust more effective. The Attorneys General of the five countries and Panama, which already has a working agreement with Eurojust, participated in the signing of the agreements. 68% of the most dangerous criminal networks operate globally, with 36% of these networks engaged in drug trafficking, according to a Europol report. These networks recycle the proceeds of their activities on a global scale, with 32% of networks laundering money both in the EU and abroad. International cooperation is essential to dismantle these networks. Eurojust supports national authorities in the EU in their cooperation with third countries. Working agreements with Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Peru will strengthen cooperation in the fight against organised crime and terrorism.

[Coordinated actions from Romanian and French authorities to stop a human trafficking network](#)

Coordinated efforts from Romanian and French authorities, with support from Eurojust and Europol, have led to the dismantling of a human trafficking network. The organised crime group (OCG) trafficked Romanian women into France for sexual exploitation. During a recent action day, eight suspects were identified, and multiple victims and witnesses were heard. The victims have been offered support. An ongoing investigation by Romanian authorities has uncovered that an organized crime group (OCG) has been involved in human trafficking, pimping, and money laundering since January 2022. The OCG recruited victims from disadvantaged backgrounds in Romania and transported them to France for sexual exploitation. The victims were controlled through coercion, including threats, force, and deception.



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Europol facilitated information exchange and provided analytical support, deploying staff to Eurojust's coordination centre on the action day. Human trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most common form of exploitation in the EU, with 87% of victims being women and girls. Judicial cooperation is essential in combating this crime, as demonstrated by Eurojust's involvement in over 300 cross-border human trafficking cases in 2023.

[Drug trafficking network active across Europe dismantled](#)

An operation in five countries led to the dismantling of an organised crime group (OCG) active across Europe. Investigations ongoing since 2021 revealed that the group was trafficking cannabis and cocaine across several EU and non-EU countries. The actions in Italy, Belgium, Germany and Ukraine, supported by Eurojust and Europol, led to the arrest of 13 suspects. Eurojust has noted a twofold increase in cross-border drug trafficking cases since 2020, supporting over 2,462 cases in 2023.

Italian authorities began investigating a drug trafficking network in December 2021, uncovering a group of individuals from various nationalities operating across Europe. Using Eurojust's facilities, Italian authorities coordinated with other countries to conduct investigations, house searches, and seizures.

On July 2, authorities from Italy, Belgium, Germany, Spain, and Ukraine, in collaboration with Europol and Interpol, arrested 13 suspects during an early morning operation at Eurojust's coordination center. The operation resulted in the seizure of electronic devices, drugs, and money. The operation was financially supported by the @ON network, funded by the European Commission and led by the Italian *Direzione Investigativa Antimafia* (DIA).

OLAF

[OLAF anti-fraud communicators network meeting strengthens collaborative efforts in the fight against fraud](#)

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) organised the annual meeting of the OLAF Anti-Fraud Communicators Network (OAFCN). The conference will bring together more than 50 communication professionals from national authorities. The two-day event, which took place on 2 and 3 July in Brussels, aimed at strengthening collaborative efforts and improving communication strategies in the



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fight against fraud affecting the financial interests of the European Union. Underlining the importance of the OLAF Anti-Fraud Communicators Network, OLAF General Director Ville Itälä said: «As we celebrate OLAF's 25th anniversary, effective communication remains a cornerstone in the fight against fraud. OAFCN members play a very important role, informing citizens about the activities that protect them, their money and society, which discourages others from committing fraud. By sharing knowledge and aligning strategies, OAFCN members are able to ensure that the anti-fraud message reaches everyone. This meeting underlines our commitment to transparency. IT will also increase collaboration between OLAF and OAFCN, resulting in increased joint efforts and more robust and effective anti-fraud campaigns». During the two-day conference, participants had the opportunity to explore and discuss the use of artificial intelligence in communication, The workshop will focus on the role of AI in public communication and interaction. Members provided an inspiring overview of their anti-fraud communication campaigns over the past year, shared best practices and how they focused their anti-fraud messages fraud and anti-corruption.

COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

[Authorisation to reside on the territory of a Member State for the purposes of studies: a Member State may reject an abusive application for authorisation, even if it has not correctly transposed the directive that provides for that option](#)

In August 2020, a Cameroonian national made an application for a visa in order to study in Belgium. The Belgian State refused it on the ground that the study plan of the person concerned is inconsistent. It considered that her application is in fact aimed at purposes other than the pursuit of studies since she has no genuine intention to study in Belgium. The person concerned challenged that decision before the Conseil du contentieux des étrangers (Council for asylum and immigration proceedings) (Belgium) which rejected the action. In January 2021, she lodged an appeal before the Belgian Council of State. The Belgian Council of State has made a reference to the Court of Justice in that regard. In its judgment, the Court holds that the directive on the conditions of entry and residence in the European Union for third-country nationals for the purposes of studies 1 does not preclude a Member State, from rejecting an application for admission to its territory for study purposes where the third-country national has submitted that application without having a genuine intention of studying there, even when that Member State has not transposed the provision of the directive which



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permits such rejection. The prohibition of abusive practices is a general principle of EU law, the application of which is not subject to a requirement of transposition. As regards the circumstances based on which it may be concluded that the application is abusive, the Court considers that such a conclusion must be based on an examination on a case-by-case basis, following an individual assessment of all the circumstances specific to each application.

INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

[Venezuela: IACHR and Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression Condemn Serious Human Rights Violations During Post-Election Protest Repression](#)

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and its Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE) have condemned the repression of demonstrators in Venezuela following the recent elections, urging the Venezuelan State to respect the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and journalistic work, and to ensure the safety of demonstrators. Since July 28, civil society organizations have recorded over 300 protests across the country against election irregularities, with at least 115 violently repressed by the state and "colectivos." Reports indicate over 11 deaths, 1,062 arrests, including minors and opposition leaders, and significant attacks on media freedom. The IACHR calls for an immediate end to human rights violations, independent investigations, release of detainees, restoration of democratic order, and vigilance from the international community to support a resolution to Venezuela's democratic and human rights crisis.

[IACHR and UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons: States must enhance the protection of victims of human trafficking](#)

On World Day against Trafficking in Persons, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons urged all States in the region to enhance national systems of assistance and provide comprehensive reparations for trafficking victims. They highlighted ongoing challenges such as barriers to justice, insufficient specialized assistance, and a lack of comprehensive reparations, with particular emphasis on the exacerbated vulnerabilities of women, girls, and individuals with disabilities. They stressed the necessity of victim-centered responses grounded in a human rights framework, including legal and medical assistance, education, and protection from re-victimization. They called for transformative reparations to address systemic



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issues and recommended institutionalizing victim assistance, providing free legal aid, facilitating documentation processes, and implementing comprehensive redress measures. The IACHR and the UN Special Rapporteur emphasized a gender-sensitive approach, prioritizing the best interests of children, and ensuring non-punishment for trafficking victims.



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