



**IECLO**

**International & European  
Criminal Law Observatory**

ON CULTURAL ISSUES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY

## MONTHLY WRAP FEBRUARY 2025

### SECURITY COUNCIL

#### [S/RES/2772](#)

The Security Council on 17 February extended until 12 March 2026 the mandate of the Panel of Experts tasked with assisting its Sanctions Committee concerning Sudan, requesting a final report on the Panel's findings and recommendations by 13 January 2026. Adopting resolution 2772 (2025), the Council — acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations — also requested the Panel to provide the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning Sudan with an *interim* report on its activities no later than 12 August. Further, the Council requested the Panel to provide updates regarding its activities to that Committee every three months, also expressing its intention to review the Panel's mandate and take appropriate action regarding its further extension no later than 12 February 2026. It also encouraged all parties, Member States and international, regional and subregional organizations to ensure continued cooperation with the Panel, as well as the safety of its members.

#### [S/RES/2773](#)

The Security Council on 21 February strongly condemned ongoing offensives by the 23 March Movement, or M23, in the North and South Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, deciding that M23 shall immediately cease hostilities, withdraw from areas it controls and fully reverse the establishment of illegitimate parallel administrations in that country's territory. Unanimously adopting resolution 2773 (2025), the Council — acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations — also called on the Rwanda Defence Force to cease support to M23 and immediately withdraw from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo without preconditions. Further, it strongly urged Kinshasa and Kigali to return to diplomatic talks, supported all initiatives and contributions to this end and reaffirmed the critical role of both the Luanda and Nairobi processes. Through the resolution, the Council additionally called for the cessation of support provided by Kinshasa's military forces to specific armed groups — particularly the Democratic



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO

**IECLO DIRECTOR: Prof. Anna ORIOLO**  
Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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Liberation Forces of Rwanda, or FDLR — as well as urgent implementation of commitments to neutralize that group. The organ also demanded that all parties facilitate the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in need. To that end, it called on all parties to urgently open temporary humanitarian corridors in North and South Kivu. By other terms, the Council reaffirmed its full support to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and emphasized that any attempts to undermine the Mission's ability to implement its mandate will not be tolerated. As well, the Council condemned the systematic illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and reaffirmed its strong commitment to that country's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

## [S/RES/2775](#)

To enforce the arms embargo on Somalia, the Security Council decided on 28 February to reauthorize maritime interdiction of illicit weapons imports and charcoal exports, reiterating its determination that Al-Shabaab's attempts to undermine peace and security in the region — including through acts of terrorism — constitute a threat to international peace and security. It authorized Member States to inspect vessels in Somali territorial waters and on the high seas extending to and including the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, which they had "reasonable grounds" to believe were carrying charcoal or weapons or military equipment, including improvised explosive devices components. Further, it authorized Member States to seize and dispose of any items identified in inspections pursuant to paragraph 15 of resolution 2182 (2014), the delivery, import or export of which is prohibited by the arms embargo on Somalia or the charcoal ban. It decided that charcoal seized in accordance with this paragraph may be disposed of through resale, which shall be monitored by the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group.

## ICC

## [International Criminal Court condemns US sanctions move](#)



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO

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(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
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The International Criminal Court (ICC) on 7 February condemned an executive order signed by United States President Donald Trump imposing punitive sanctions, countering that the order sought to “harm its independent and impartial judicial work.” The 6 February's executive order said the US government would “impose tangible and significant consequences” on ICC officials who work on investigations that threaten national security of the US and allies – including Israel. The directive follows the decision by ICC judges to issue arrest warrants in November for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defence minister Yoav Gallant, which accuses them of alleged war crimes in relation to the conduct of the war with Hamas on Gaza. The ICC also issued a warrant for a former Hamas commander, Mohammed Deif. The US executive order says that the ICC actions against Israel and preliminary investigations against the US “set a dangerous precedent, directly endangering current and former” personnel. The order details possible sanctions including the blocking of property and assets of ICC officials and barring them and their families from entering the US.

## **UNITED NATIONS *AD HOC* TRIBUNALS**

### [TRIAL PANEL APPROVES PLEA AGREEMENTS](#)

On 4 February 2025, the Trial Panel of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, in the case of Sabit Januzi, Ismet Bahtijari, and Haxhi Shala, approved their plea agreements with the Specialist Prosecutor's Office (SPO). The three accused admitted guilt to two charges: obstructing official persons in performing official duties and intimidation in criminal proceedings. A third charge, obstruction by serious threat, was withdrawn by the SPO on 17 December 2024 as part of the plea agreements. The accused admitted to being part of a group that sought to persuade an individual not to testify before the Kosovo Specialist Chambers by promising a benefit.

### [PRESIDENT EKATERINA TENDAFILOVA GRANTS SABIT JANUZI AND ISMET BAHTIJARI MODIFICATION OF SENTENCE](#)

On 19 February 2025, the President of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC), Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova, decided to modify the sentences of Sabit Januzi and Ismet Bahtijari, granting their



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**IECLO DIRECTOR: Prof. Anna ORIOLO**  
Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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release on 21 February 2025 under specific conditions. These conditions will remain in effect for the remainder of their two-year sentences.

In making her decision, the President consulted the Judges of the sentencing panel and considered the relevant legal provisions. While acknowledging the gravity of the offenses—witness intimidation and its impact on the administration of justice—she found factors that justified modifying their sentences. This decision marks the third and fourth cases of sentence commutation, modification, or alteration at the KSC. Under Article 51(2) of the Law, such proceedings are conducted individually, and eligibility for sentence modification begins after serving two-thirds of a sentence, though it is not an automatic right. The full decisions are available on the KSC’s website.

## OHCHR

### [Syria: Assad’s armed forces must face accountability, says rights probe](#)

Widespread pillaging and the destruction of property in Syria by all parties to the conflict have largely gone unpunished and likely amount to war crimes, top independent rights investigators reporting to the Human Rights Council maintained on 6 February. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria’s latest report follows the lightning operation led by mainly Hayat-Tahrir al-Sham fighters that toppled President Bashar al-Assad last December, ending the 13-year war that decimated the country and destabilised the entire region. The violence is believed to have killed hundreds of thousands of Syrians and uprooted 15 million, the report’s authors said. They noted that various armed groups – including former government troops and opposition fighters – carried out widescale damage to and pillaged Syrian property, particularly in areas that changed hands repeatedly during the fighting. The Assad regime’s security forces targeted those perceived as political opponents, including demonstrators, activists, deserters and defectors, their families and communities, the report’s authors continued. Vast areas of land where refugees and internally displaced people had relocated to were also pillaged and ransacked to the point of rendering entire neighbourhoods uninhabitable. Forces stole household items, furniture and valuables, which they would sometimes sell at markets including some created specifically for this purpose.

### [UN rights office warns of ‘dangerous tipping point’ as abuses surge in Sudan](#)



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IECLO DIRECTOR: Prof. Anna ORIOLO  
Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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The UN human rights office (OHCHR) on 18 February sounded the alarm over escalating rights abuses in Sudan, warning that impunity is driving violations as fighting spreads and more armed groups become involved. In a new report, UN investigators detailed multiple attacks on civilians, healthcare facilities, markets, and schools, as well as ethnically motivated summary executions. Among its key recommendations, the report called for expanding the arms embargo and the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to cover the whole of Sudan – not just the region of Darfur, where atrocities raged unchecked 20 years ago. The report highlighted the widespread use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, with 120 documented incidents affecting at least 203 victims. Cases are likely vastly underreported due to fear, stigma, and the collapse of medical and judicial institutions. The report also detailed widespread disappearances and a generalised crackdown on civic space, including killings of journalists and attacks on human rights defenders.

## IAEA

### [Alarming trends in nuclear material trafficking highlight urgent security gaps](#)

There were just under 150 incidents of illegal or unauthorised activity involving nuclear and other radioactive material reported last year, according to the international nuclear energy watchdog's monitoring database tracking these incidents. New data released on 28 February from the UN-backed International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reveals that while the overall number remains consistent with previous years, the continued incidents of trafficking and radioactive contamination cases raises concerns over nuclear security. Most incidents did not involve organised crime, but experts warn that even a single case of nuclear material falling into the wrong hands could pose serious global risks. A troubling trend in 2024 has been the rise in contaminated industrial materials, such as used pipes and metal parts that unknowingly entered supply chains. The transportation of radioactive materials remains one of the most vulnerable areas of nuclear security. Over the past decade, 65 percent of all reported thefts have occurred while materials were in transit. Experts emphasise the need for stronger safety measures while goods are on the move to prevent radioactive material from being lost or stolen. Enhanced international cooperation is also essential to ensure proper security along supply chains.



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
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## OSCE

### [OSCE cybersecurity points of contact from Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus visit the Netherlands](#)

From 2 to 6 February 2025, the OSCE, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, organised a study visit to the Netherlands for political and technical cyber security contact points from Eastern Europe, South-Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus. The initiative is part of OSCE Confidence Building Measure Number 8 (CBM 8), which aims to improve cooperation in the cyber field. During the visit, the participants met with representatives from Dutch ministries, institutions and private companies, gaining knowledge on cyber security best practices, exploring opportunities for collaboration and exploring strategies to strengthen digital resilience. The workshop at the Clingendael Academy provided insights into international guidelines for managing and attributing cyber attacks, as well as practical exercises on real-life scenarios. Maartje Peters, from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasised the importance of a proactive approach and enhanced cooperation to counter the growing complexity of cyber threats. The participants praised the Dutch model of collaboration between the public, private and academic sectors and recognised it as a good example to be applied in their respective countries. The initiative is part of the project 'Strengthening the work of the crisis communication network of the 8 CBM contact points', funded by the Netherlands.

### [Law on Border Control, a key step for BiH's response to security challenges and threats](#)

On 31 January 2025, the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina welcomed the adoption of the Border Control Law by the country's Parliamentary Assembly. This legislation strengthens Bosnia and Herzegovina's capacity to address challenges such as cross-border crime and irregular migration by introducing Advanced Passenger Information Systems (API/PNR) to improve security and risk assessment. The OSCE will continue to support the development and implementation of legislation for effective border management and enhanced inter-agency cooperation.

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE

### [Liechtenstein urged to improve identification of trafficking victims and step up efforts to combat trafficking for labour exploitation](#)



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)





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On 3 February 2025, the Group of Experts on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) called on Liechtenstein to improve the identification of victims of trafficking and to intensify its efforts against trafficking for labour exploitation. Although the police identified nine alleged cases of trafficking between 2018 and 2023, no victims have been officially recognised. GRETA stresses the need not to link the identification of victims to successful investigations or criminal proceedings. Furthermore, authorities need to pay more attention to victims among migrants and asylum seekers. The report also highlights the need to improve access to justice for victims by ensuring legal assistance and information on their rights, such as the right to recovery, reflection and compensation. In addition, it recommends strengthening inspections in high-risk sectors, such as construction and care, and strengthening the legal protection of domestic workers and home helpers.

### [Council of Europe consolidates action on migration and refugees](#)

On 15 January 2025, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Alain Berset, announced his intention to strengthen the organisation's efforts on migration and refugees. As of February 2025, a division dedicated to migration and refugees has been created within the Directorate-General for Human Rights and the Rule of Law (DGI). This division will ensure continuity of the actions already outlined in the Council of Europe Action Plan (2021-2025), supporting Member States in addressing migration issues and working with international partners such as UNHCR, IOM, and the European Union. Since 2015, work in this area has been led by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (RSSG), who have supported Member States during migration crises, such as the one caused by the war in Ukraine. The Secretary-General thanked the outgoing Representatives for their significant contributions.

### [Secretary General welcomes major step towards creating a Special Tribunal for Ukraine](#)

On 4 February 2025, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Alain Berset, welcomed an important step towards the creation of a special court for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. During the 13th meeting of the International Working Group, composed of legal experts from 40 states, the legal foundations of the court, including its statute, were defined. Mr. Berset emphasised the Council of Europe's continuous commitment to support Ukraine since the beginning of the war, also highlighting the progress of other initiatives, such as the Register of Damages for Victims of Russian Aggression and the ongoing compensation mechanism. The creation of the tribunal is a crucial step towards ensuring justice and establishing Russia's responsibility, but Berset warned that the process is still long.

### [Bosnia and Herzegovina urged to strengthen efforts against money laundering and terrorist financing](#)



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
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84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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On 5 February 2025, the Council of Europe's anti-money laundering body, MONEYVAL, published a report calling on Bosnia and Herzegovina to strengthen measures against money laundering and terrorist financing. Although the country received a moderate rating in nine of the eleven areas analysed, including risk, international cooperation, and use of intelligence, significant improvements are needed. In particular, enforcement of UN financial sanctions and risk management in the non-profit sector are deficient. Money laundering and terrorist financing investigations do not match the country's risk profile, and international cooperation, while good, is not proactive. MONEYVAL decided to apply enhanced monitoring and requested Bosnia and Herzegovina to report on progress by December 2026.

### [Bulgaria: anti-corruption body assesses implementation of recommendations to prevent corruption in central government and law enforcement agencies](#)

The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) of the Council of Europe has published a report on the status of implementation of recommendations to prevent corruption in Bulgaria. The report shows that Bulgaria has fully implemented 7 of the 28 recommendations, while 11 have been partially implemented and 10 have not been implemented. Despite progress in legislative and policy reforms, further improvements are needed in the implementation of the recommendations. GRECO requested that Bulgaria provide updates by May 31, 2026 to achieve an acceptable level of compliance.

### [New publication on how to use conflict zone information in terrorism trials](#)

The Council of Europe, through the Committee to Combat Terrorism (CDCT), has developed legal instruments to counter terrorism, with a focus on the use of information gathered in conflict zones as evidence in criminal trials. In March 2022, the Organization adopted a recommendation to regulate the collection and use of such information, followed by the publication of the guide “Comparative Practices Concerning the Use of Information Collected in Conflict Zones as Evidence in Criminal Proceedings.” The aim is to provide practical guidance to support investigations and prosecutions related to crimes of terrorism and violations of international humanitarian law, ensuring respect for the rule of law and human rights.

### [Council of Europe adopts new guidelines on prosecution of violent extremism](#)

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers has adopted new guidelines to strengthen the prosecution of violent extremism that can result in terrorism. Drafted by the Committee against Terrorism (CDCT), they provide strategies for prosecuting far-right, far-left and other extremist groups through counterterrorism criminal law.



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)





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The [guidelines](#) outline the stages of prosecution, from investigation to indictment, highlighting the need to understand how extremist groups function, their flexible structure, and how they operate.

Main aspects of the guidelines:

- Investigative techniques: use of intelligence, online surveillance and financial investigations to detect terrorism-related criminal activities.
- Cooperation: need to strengthen collaboration between states and agencies to monitor communications between extremist groups across borders.
- Prevention: focus on radicalization, particularly in prisons, and promotion of disengagement programs.
- Respect for human rights: all measures must comply with the European Convention on Human Rights, ensuring a balance between security and fundamental freedoms.

The guidelines are part of the Council of Europe's Counter-Terrorism Strategy 2023-2027 and are based on the findings of the 2022 New Terrorist Threats Report. They provide a practical tool for national justice authorities to develop effective strategies for the criminal prosecution of violent extremism.

[The fight for Ukraine is a fight for justice: Secretary General releases report on Council of Europe's response to Russia's war on Ukraine](#)

On the third anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Council of Europe Secretary General Alain Berset released a report highlighting the organization's commitment to supporting Ukraine. The document points out that the war not only causes destruction and suffering, but also undermines the basic principles of international law and the rules-based order. The Council of Europe has responded to the aggression with concrete measures, including the exclusion of Russia from the Organization in March 2022 and the adoption of the Action Plan 2023-2026, aimed at strengthening Ukraine's resilience, recovery and reconstruction. In addition, the Organization is working to ensure that Russia is accountable for its actions and to provide support for Ukrainian children, both in the country and in the rest of Europe. Berset reiterated that democracy, human rights and the rule of law remain the guiding principles of the Council of Europe in addressing the conflict and supporting the right of the Ukrainian people to determine their own future.

[GRECO: Ukraine makes further progress in preventing corruption among parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors, but more efforts needed](#)

GRECO, the Council of Europe's anti-corruption body, recognizes Ukraine's progress in preventing corruption among parliamentarians, judges, and prosecutors, despite war-related difficulties. In its latest [report](#), it notes that 18 of the 31 [recommendations](#) have been satisfactorily implemented, while



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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11 have been partially implemented and 2 remain unimplemented. Progress includes monitoring financial statements, regulating relations between parliamentarians and lobbyists, and simplifying the appointment of judges. In addition, legislative measures have been adopted and members of key judicial bodies appointed. The two recommendations yet to be implemented concern the random case allocation system for prosecutors, the definition of disciplinary offenses, and the expansion of disciplinary sanctions to make them more proportionate and effective. GRECO calls on the Ukrainian authorities to complete the outstanding measures and requests a progress report by November 30, 2025.

### [Canada and Japan sign Council of Europe's first ever global treaty on AI](#)

Canada and Japan have signed the Council of Europe [Framework Convention](#) on Artificial Intelligence, joining the first 11 signatories to this first legally binding treaty aimed at ensuring that the use of AI complies with human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The treaty, open for signature on September 5, 2024 in Vilnius, establishes a regulatory framework for the entire life cycle of AI systems, balancing progress and risk management. It is technologically neutral to ensure its durability over time. The 46 member states of the Council of Europe, the EU and several observer and non-member states participated in its drafting, with input from representatives of the private sector, civil society and academia. The Convention will enter into force after ratification by at least five signatories, including three Council of Europe member states, and will remain open to accession by other countries.

## EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

### [A.B. and Y.W. v. Malta](#) (Application no. 2559/23)

The applicants, A.B. and Y.W., are a married couple. They are Chinese nationals of Uighur ethnicity and Muslim faith. At the time of lodging the application, they were detained in Malta but were released thereafter. The couple arrived in Malta in August 2016 with valid Chinese passports bearing a 3-month Schengen visa. Prior to the expiration of their visa, they approached the Office of the Refugee Commissioner seeking international protection, claiming that, due to their ethnicity, their house and they themselves had been subjected to numerous searches and they were at risk of arbitrary arrest and ill-treatment in China. The case concerns Malta refusing international protection, and the remedy they undertook against that removal order. Relying on Articles 2 (right to life) and 3



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IECLO DIRECTOR: Prof. Anna ORIOLO  
Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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(prohibition of torture/inhuman or degrading treatment) of the Convention in conjunction with Article 13 (right to an effective remedy), the applicants complain that they would be at risk of ill-treatment if they were returned to China and that they had no effective remedy to assess that risk. The Court has found a violation of Article because, should the applicants be removed to China without an *ex nunc* rigorous assessment of the risk, they would face on their return to Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region as Uighur Muslims rejected asylum seekers.

## **COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

[European Peace Facility: Council adopts first-ever assistance measure in support of the Armed Forces of Montenegro](#)

The Council has approved a €6 million assistance measure under the European Peace Facility to strengthen Montenegro's Armed Forces. This initiative aims to enhance national security, stability, and resilience in the defence sector, while also boosting Montenegro's participation in EU security and defence operations and international coalitions.

The support includes real-life support equipment for extreme cold weather, CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear) defence equipment, and gear for helicopter-borne search and rescue units. Additionally, technical training and related services will be provided as needed.

This measure underscores the EU's ongoing commitment to security and defence cooperation with Montenegro and the broader Western Balkans, highlighting Montenegro's full alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

[Remarks by President António Costa at the International summit on the support of Ukraine](#)

Three years ago, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. A Russian war of aggression that was unprovoked, unjustified and illegal. A war that violates Ukraine's sovereignty, its territorial integrity, its internationally recognised borders, and the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

European Council President António Costa visited Kyiv to attend the International Summit on Supporting Ukraine, marking the third anniversary of Russia's invasion. In his speech, he reaffirmed the EU's unwavering solidarity with Ukraine and its people, while stressing the need for credible peace negotiations that fully include both Ukraine and the EU.



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
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[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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President Costa also highlighted the EU's commitment to strengthening its defence capabilities and expressed confidence in a future where Ukraine flourishes as a full member of the European Union.

## [Syria: EU suspends restrictive measures on key economic sectors](#)

The Council has decided to suspend several restrictive measures on Syria to support an inclusive political transition, economic recovery, and reconstruction. The EU seeks to facilitate engagement with Syria in key sectors such as energy and transport, while easing financial transactions related to humanitarian and reconstruction efforts.

Key measures include:

- Suspension of sectoral restrictions in the energy and transport sectors.
- Removal of five financial entities from the sanctions list and permission for transactions with the Syrian Central Bank.
- Exemptions allowing banking relations for transactions tied to energy, transport, and humanitarian needs.
- Indefinite extension of the humanitarian exemption.
- Exemption for personal use from the ban on luxury goods exports to Syria.

The Council will continue monitoring the situation and may suspend further sanctions if appropriate. However, it maintains restrictions on the Al-Assad regime, the chemical weapons sector, illicit drug trade, arms trade, dual-use goods, internal repression equipment, surveillance software, and cultural heritage exports.

The EU has used sanctions as a tool against the Al-Assad regime for its repression of Syrian civilians. With its fall, the EU supports Syrians, both inside the country and in the diaspora, in rebuilding their nation during this transitional period.

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

### [Deal on new EU rules to reduce textile and food waste](#)

The European Parliament and Council have reached a provisional agreement on new measures to reduce food and textile waste across the EU.

Food Waste Reduction

Binding national targets must be met by 31 December 2030:

- A 10% reduction in food processing and manufacturing.
- A 30% per capita reduction in retail, restaurants, food services, and households.



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
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[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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These reductions will be based on the 2021-2023 annual average. Additionally, economic operators involved in food waste prevention must facilitate the donation of safe, unsold food.

#### Producer Responsibility for Textile Waste

EU countries must introduce producer responsibility (EPR) schemes, requiring textile producers to cover the costs of collection, sorting, and recycling within 30 months of the directive's entry into force. Micro-enterprises will have 12 extra months to comply. These rules apply to all producers, including those selling via e-commerce, regardless of location.

The rules cover clothing, accessories, footwear, household textiles, and potentially mattresses. Member states must also address the impact of fast fashion when setting EPR financial contributions.

#### Next Steps

The agreement follows an "early second reading" process. The Council must formally adopt its position before final endorsement by the European Parliament.

#### [Human rights breaches in Türkiye, Nicaragua and Nigeria](#)

The European Parliament has adopted human rights resolutions concerning Türkiye, Nicaragua, and Nigeria.

##### Türkiye: Violations of Rule of Law and Democracy

MEPs express deep concern over Türkiye's disregard for democracy and the rule of law, particularly the replacement of elected Kurdish mayors with government-appointed trustees. They condemn the arbitrary dismissal and imprisonment of mayors Mehmet Sıddık Akış and Abdullah Zeydan, calling for their release and reinstatement. The resolution urges judicial reforms, the resumption of the Kurdish peace process, and potential sanctions on Turkish officials involved in these violations.

##### Nicaragua: Repression Under the Ortega-Murillo Regime

Parliament strongly condemns the Ortega-Murillo regime's systematic human rights violations, including persecution of political opponents and religious leaders. MEPs demand the release of arbitrarily detained individuals, the restoration of the rule of law, and the annulment of repressive laws. They call for International Criminal Court investigations into crimes against humanity and sanctions against President Daniel Ortega, Vice President Rosario Murillo, and their associates.

##### Nigeria: Blasphemy Laws and the Case of Yahaya Sharif-Aminu

MEPs urge Nigeria to respect human rights and religious freedom by releasing Yahaya Sharif-Aminu and others facing blasphemy charges. They denounce blasphemy laws as violations of international law and call for the alignment of Nigerian federal and Sharia laws with human rights protections, including the abolition of the death penalty. The resolution also urges Nigeria to combat false blasphemy accusations and mob violence.



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO

**IECLO DIRECTOR: Prof. Anna ORIOLO**  
Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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## EPPO

### [Bulgaria: EPPO files indictment for fraud on EU employment support funds](#)

The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Sofia (Bulgaria) filed an indictment on 26 February 2025 against two individuals suspected of fraud against the European Social Fund (ESF) and national co-financing, for a total amount of €66,750. The defendants, a director of a Bulgarian company and an accomplice acting as project manager, are accused of providing false information to the Bulgarian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy in order to fraudulently obtain funding to support job opportunities for unemployed and inactive people. The funds were awarded under the 2014-2020 Human Resources Development Operational Programme, which aims to promote sustainable local employment. Il progetto in questione mirava a fornire opportunità di lavoro, formazione professionale e qualifiche alle persone che intendevano entrare o rientrare nel mondo del lavoro. However, the survey revealed that in 2021 and 2022, false documents were created to give the impression that the project's objectives had been achieved. These included forged employment contracts and signatures, which were then presented as part of the financial and technical reports required for the final payment.

## OLAF

### [OLAF completes investigation into alleged serious irregularities in the supply of EU-funded electricity generators for Ukraine](#)

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has recommended the recovery of more than EUR 91 million for the purchase and supply of electricity generators to areas of Ukraine affected by electricity shortages. OLAF completed its investigation into alleged serious breaches of procurement, transparency and financial management rules in June 2024 in a €114 million EU-funded project managed by the Polish Government Agency for Strategic Reserves (RARS). In addition to the EUR 91 million recommended for recovery, a further EUR 22 million was protected from undue expenditure, allowing them to reach those who needed assistance. During the case, OLAF worked closely with the Central Anti-Corruption Office (CBA) and the Polish Public Prosecutor's Office, leading to the arrest of at least three individuals. *"We need every euro of EU support to Ukraine to reach those in need and ensure that our taxpayers' money is spent properly. Protecting EU aid to Ukraine not only ensures that our taxpayers' money is spent properly, but it is also a security issue. Thanks to our strong cooperation with the CBA and the Polish Public Prosecutor's Office, we have*



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)





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*successfully safeguarded the financial interests of the EU*", said Ville Itälä, Director-General of OLAF.

## EUROJUST

### [New project hosted by Eurojust broadens the scope of action against impunity for war crimes and genocide beyond the EU](#)

Cooperation with countries outside the European Union to combat impunity for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity will be strengthened by a new dedicated project launched at Eurojust. This should lead to fewer "safe havens" for perpetrators of these core international crimes. Collaboration with civil society organisations (CSOs) and coordination of their efforts can also be strengthened through this four-year National Authorities against Impunity Project (IMPNA). The practical objective of this project is to assist CSOs at regional and local level and to create platforms for their cooperation with judicial authorities outside the EU. This will help organisations to manage the increase in human rights violations due to the sharp rise of armed conflicts around the world. The number of armed conflicts worldwide has doubled in the last five years, according to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED). This has led to a sharp increase in war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity, the so-called core international crimes. This poses particular challenges for the international community in pursuing accountability in order to obtain justice for victims by exercising universal and extraterritorial jurisdiction.

## INTERPOL

### [INTERPOL and African Development Bank to cooperate on combating financial crime and corruption](#)

INTERPOL and the African Development Bank Group signed a letter of intent to strengthen cooperation in the fight against corruption, financial crimes, computer fraud and money laundering. The agreement, signed by African Development Bank President Akinwumi Adesina and INTERPOL Secretary General Valdecy Urquiza during the latter's official visit to Abidjan, represents a significant step in the fight against financial crime. The Bank is the first multilateral development institution to establish such a partnership with INTERPOL, an arrangement that aims to improve the synergy between its Integrity and Anti-Corruption Office (PIAC) and the INTERPOL Centre for Combating Financial Crime and Corruption (IFCACC). The agreement provides for sharing expertise, enhancing investigative capabilities and developing strategies to prevent new threats related to financial crime.



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
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This joint effort comes at a crucial time, as Africa experiences annual losses of more than USD 90 billion due to illicit financial flows, resources that could be directed to key sectors such as infrastructure, health and energy. The Global Financial Fraud Assessment conducted in 2024 by INTERPOL showed an increase in digital crimes such as phishing, corporate email compromise and romance baiting, made more dangerous by the advancement of digital technology on the continent. INTERPOL Secretary General Valdecy Urquiza emphasised that corruption and financial crime are critical obstacles to economic and social development in Africa and around the world, reiterating that this partnership will help African law enforcement and financial institutions to deal with increasingly sophisticated threats. The President of the African Development Bank, Akinwumi Adesina, emphasised that this partnership demonstrates the institution's commitment to protecting development resources and ensuring that they reach their intended recipients, stressing that the Bank, recognised for two consecutive years as the world's most transparent by Publish What You Fund, maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and terrorist financing. Through this alliance with INTERPOL, the Bank will strengthen the capacity of African countries to develop robust systems against money laundering and financial crime. With annual investments of around USD 10 billion in development finance, mainly for government projects, the Bank Group aims to ensure that these resources are not compromised by illicit activities.

## EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (FRA)

### [FRA exchanges views with Human Dimension Advisors to OSCE](#)

On 5<sup>TH</sup> February, FRA experts exchanged views with Human Dimension experts from the EU Delegation to International Organisations in Vienna and EU Member States Permanent Representations to the OSCE.

FRA discussed some of its recent work. This includes protecting human rights defenders at risk and access to visas, EU enlargement, and its work on the fundamental rights implications in the EU for people fleeing the war in Ukraine, as well as relevant upcoming work such as the EU gender-based violence survey.

## EUROPOL

### [First meeting of the GCC-European Directors General of Criminal Investigations](#)



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(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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On 5 and 6 February 2025, Abu Dhabi hosted the first meeting of the Directors General of Criminal Investigation and Intelligence between the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries, the EU, GCCPOL and Europol. The meeting addressed shared threats such as cybercrime, financial crime, money laundering, online child exploitation, human trafficking and environmental crimes. Participants exchanged knowledge on emerging trends in transnational crime and discussed strategies to strengthen cooperation. This meeting reinforced the collaboration initiated with the 2017 letter of intent between GCCPOL and Europol, aimed at:

- Share good practices in the fight against crime.
- Building capacity for cooperation and exchange of information between law enforcement agencies.
- Strengthen internal security between GCC and EU countries.

The aim is to improve cross-border cooperation to counter criminal networks and protect communities in both regions.

### [Call for action: urgent plan needed to transition to post-quantum cryptography together](#)

On 7 February 2025, Europol organised the Quantum Safe Financial Forum (QSFF), urging the financial sector and policymakers to urgently address the transition to post-quantum cryptography (PQC). With the rapid advancement of quantum computing, current cryptographic systems are at risk, and the transition to quantum-safe solutions is essential to protect the confidentiality of financial transactions, authentication processes and digital contracts. Although quantum computers capable of threatening such systems may not be ready for 10-15 years, preparation for the transition requires time and coordination between various actors. During the event, the need for strong collaboration between financial institutions, technology providers, policy makers and regulators emerged in order to ensure effective transition planning. Although no new legislation is required, it is crucial to establish a voluntary framework between regulators and the private sector to promote the adoption of secure quantum cryptography and ensure standardisation. Furthermore, it was emphasised that the threat of ‘Store Now, Decrypt Later’ (SNDL) attacks, where encrypted data is stored to be decrypted in the future, poses an increasing risk to sensitive financial information, such as investment strategies and confidential agreements. The forum revealed that despite regulatory progress in some jurisdictions, a 2023 survey showed that 86 per cent of financial organisations feel unprepared for post-quantum security. The QSFF therefore called for timely measures to protect the financial sector from potential economic and reputational damage, urging all stakeholders to adopt secure quantum crypto solutions before it is too late.



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(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
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[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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## [Key figures behind Phobos and 8Base ransomware arrested in international cybercrime crackdown](#)

On 11 February 2025, an international operation led to the arrest of four key members of the 8Base ransomware group, which had used a variant of the Phobos ransomware to extort money from small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe and beyond. At the same time, 27 servers linked to this criminal network were shut down. The operation involved 14 countries and was supported by Europol and Eurojust. Phobos, which emerged in 2018, is known for its 'Ransomware-as-a-Service' (RaaS) model, which made ransomware easily accessible even to less experienced actors. The 8Base group exploited this infrastructure to adapt attacks, applying double extortion techniques. Europol played a crucial role in coordinating the investigation, facilitating the exchange of information and technical support between the law enforcement agencies involved, which also included countries such as the United States, Japan, Germany and France. The investigation also led to significant arrests, including the arrest of a Phobos director in South Korea in 2024 and an affiliate in Italy. Overall, the operation helped dismantle criminal networks linked to ransomware, protecting numerous companies from imminent attacks.

## [3 arrested in Moldova for links with the Wagner Group](#)

On 14 February 2025, Moldovan authorities, with the support of Ukrainian forces and Europol, arrested three individuals accused of links to the paramilitary group Wagner, involved in war crimes in Ukraine. The operation involved over 50 searches in Moldova, leading to the seizure of documents, electronic equipment, videos and photos proving the recruitment and training of the suspected mercenaries, as well as their involvement in battles such as those in Bakhmut and Donetsk. The investigation revealed that the arrested, Moldovan citizens, had participated in conflicts in Ukraine as members of the Wagner Group, receiving medals from Russian forces. Europol facilitated the exchange of information, coordinated operations and offered analytical support, monitoring operational data in real time.

## [14 arrested in hit against money laundering gang in Portugal and Spain](#)

On 19 February 2025, a cross-border operation, coordinated by Europol and led by the Spanish authorities, dismantled a criminal network offering money laundering services, mainly composed of Russian nationals. The network, which operated in Spain and Portugal, had laundered more than EUR 1 million, using the Hawala method to transfer funds from drug trafficking. The operation, carried out on 21 January 2025, led to 14 arrests, 9 house searches and the seizure of more than EUR 1 million in cash and cryptocurrencies. The investigators, supported by Europol experts, analysed daily transactions of up to EUR 300,000 per day. Europol emphasised the importance of financial



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(School of Law)  
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Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
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investigations and asset recovery to combat organised criminal groups. The operation is part of the EU Security Strategy, with EU funding to support operations against crime.

## [Europol publishes framework for ethical technology in law enforcement](#)

On 20 February 2025, Europol published a report entitled *Technology Assessment in Law Enforcement: A Method for Ethical Decision Making*, which provides a structured approach to help law enforcement agencies assess new technologies ethically, respecting fundamental rights and public trust. The report proposes a seven-step ethical evaluation method, focusing on transparency, privacy, accountability and fairness. It examines different technologies, such as video analytics, artificial intelligence for the risk of gender-based violence, open source data collection and the use of chatbots for child protection. It does not offer definitive judgements, but helps law enforcement agencies consider ethical, legal and practical implications in adopting new technologies. The report will be updated regularly to reflect technological advances and promote public trust in law enforcement.

## [25 arrested in global hit against AI-generated child sexual abuse material](#)

On 28 February 2025, Europol supported a global operation against child sexual exploitation, leading to 25 arrests in 19 countries. The operation, called *Cumberland*, targeted a criminal group that distributed child sexual abuse images entirely generated by artificial intelligence (AI). Most of the arrests took place on 26 February 2025. The results include 273 identified suspects, 33 searches and the seizure of 173 electronic devices. The main suspect, a Danish citizen, operated an online platform to distribute AI-generated material. The operation addressed the difficulties related to the lack of specific laws on this emerging crime, with ongoing discussions on European regulations to combat it. Europol highlighted the increasing difficulty in identifying artificially generated content that contributes to the sexualisation of children. The operation was not limited to arrests, but also included preventive measures, including an online campaign to raise awareness of the crime.

## EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF REGION

### [Regions and cities team-up with the European Council to deliver the EU Strategic Agenda on the ground](#)

18/02/2025



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132  
84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
[www.ieclo.org](http://www.ieclo.org)  
[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)



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On 19 February, António Costa, President of the European Council, joined the inaugural plenary session of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR), marking the start of a new mandate. In his speech, he highlighted the crucial role of cities and regions in building a stronger, fairer, and more resilient Europe.

Costa emphasized the importance of economic, social, and territorial cohesion, as well as the green and digital transitions, aligning with the EU Strategic Agenda 2024-2029, adopted in June by EU leaders. During the plenary debate, chaired by CoR President Vasco Alves Cordeiro, Costa urged European institutions and national governments to collaborate with cities and regions on shared strategic goals.

CoR members called on Costa to monitor EU priorities, proposing an annual political debate to assess the Strategic Agenda's implementation at the local and regional levels. They also noted that many of its priorities reflect the Mons Declaration (March 2024), which outlined regional and municipal leaders' vision for a stronger and more resilient Europe.



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Department of Legal Sciences  
(School of Law)  
University of Salerno  
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84084 Fisciano (SA) - Italy  
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[info@ieclo.org](mailto:info@ieclo.org)