

## **General Assembly Seminar on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism**

**Date:** 28 October 2016

**Location:** Hotel Dubrovnik, Zagreb

**Objectives:**

- Facilitate discussion between NHRIs and key stakeholders on counter-terrorism measures and their impacts on human rights throughout Europe
- Exchange knowledge and good practices between ENNHRI members
- Consider future actions by ENNHRI and partners to support NHRIs to promote and protect human rights in the context of counter-terrorism and combating extremism

**Context:**

The latest terrorist attacks in France, Belgium and Turkey have left Europe in shock, mourning and fear of further attacks. At the same time, a large increase in counter-terrorism measures and legislation risks large-scale violations of human rights, including in countries that had not previously been targeted by such attacks. Similar developments are occurring at a regional level, including the proposed EU Directive on Combatting Terrorism.

Counter-terrorism measures can impact on human rights in a variety of manners, including mass surveillance, discriminatory policing and security activities, emergency measures with derogations from international human rights standards, and a restriction on public assemblies. However, the climate of fear following terrorist attacks, combined with a narrative that liberty must be sacrificed for security, has led to mistrust of the human rights framework.

NHRIs are crucial actors in providing a clear message to both the state and the public on the importance of respecting human rights, which can in fact reinforce social cohesion and security. NHRIs' core functions of monitoring, advising, complaints-handling and also awareness-raising in relation to the human rights situation in their respective countries are vital in the current context of combatting terrorism.

As a follow-up to ENNHRI 1 (Utrecht, December 2015), ENNHRI co-hosted with the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe a brainstorming meeting on NHRIs and counter-terrorism in Paris on 20 May 2016. ENNHRI members with expertise on counter-terrorism, and representatives of human rights mechanisms,

discussed how best to support NHRIs' work in this area. At this meeting, members requested further exchange of information and practice between ENNHRI members. This call was repeated by ENNHRI members following training on human rights and counter-terrorism at the NHRI Academy in Tbilisi (June 2016), and counter-terrorism was requested by several members to be the topic of the General Assembly Seminar at ENNHRI 2.

**Approach:**

At ENNHRI 2, on 28 October 2016, the General Assembly Seminar on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism will provide a forum for European NHRIs and valued stakeholders to discuss the current interplay between counter-terrorism measures and human rights at both national and European levels. In addition, it will facilitate ENNHRI members' exchange of experiences and good practices to develop European NHRIs' promotion and protection of human rights in this context. ENNHRI and its partners will take note of NHRIs' experiences and requests in order to support their future action, both individually and collectively.

ENNHRI will invite all members and key stakeholders to the General Assembly Seminar, which will have two panels in plenary, and several small group sessions so that the full scope of the human rights implications of counter-terrorism measures can be taken into account.

Aspects of counter-terrorism to be addressed at ENNHRI 2 include:

- An opening panel discussion on challenges posed by the specific nature of counter-terrorism legislation: urgency, secrecy and state of emergency
- New legal frameworks for a changing landscape: mass surveillance, traveling for terrorist purposes and deprivation of nationality
- Discriminatory impacts of some counter-terrorism measures
- Promoting and communicating human rights in a climate of security and fear
- A concluding panel on the role of NHRIs in addressing human rights implications of counter-terrorism measures

Speakers will include ENNHRI members and representatives from OHCHR, the Council of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR, the European Union and civil society.

**Further Information:**

More detailed information will be posted on the ENNHRI 2 page at <http://ennhri.org/ENNHRI2-General-Assembly> in the coming weeks (accessible with the password provided by ENNHRI's Secretariat)

If you would like any clarifications, or have any comments, please don't hesitate to contact the Secretariat at [Zoe.Vautard@ennhri.org](mailto:Zoe.Vautard@ennhri.org).