

**Press release**

For immediate release

## **Council of Europe and member states urged to act on two-year old promise to review anti-terror laws**

Madrid, 10 June 2011: Human rights, media and journalists' organisations from across Europe today wrote to the Council of Europe urging it to press member states to act on a promise made in May 2009 to review anti-terror laws for their negative impact on freedom of expression and access to information.

The 36 European and international organisations expressed "serious concern at the lack of action by Council of Europe member states on the commitment made at the Reykjavik Ministerial Conference on 29 May 2009 to review anti-terror laws" and urged the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, as the region's main human rights defence body, to use all his powers to ensure that such a review takes place.

In the letter the organisations quote the words of Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland on 3 May 2011, World Press Freedom Day, when he stated that, "*Freedom of speech is one of the essential pillars of a genuine democracy, it requires extraordinary protection.*"

Commenting on the current situation in Europe, Access Info Europe's Executive Director of Helen Darbishire said: "*There is compelling evidence that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 were used to justify the introduction of measures which have curbed human rights and civil liberties. It is now imperative that proper human rights impact assessments be conducted on the new security framework: only then can necessary amendments be made to law and practice so that the balance is redressed and fundamental human rights are adequately protected.*"

"*The Council of Europe has the job of protecting human rights and democracy in Europe. It should ensure that its members do not get away with making empty promises about their respect for human rights,*" added Darbishire.

The letter was copied to other Council of Europe institutions, including the Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). They are also urged to act to ensure that the core democratic rights of freedom of expression and access to information are not compromised in the name of security.

***For more information - in English or French - please contact:***

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