

## 2.4 Rule of Law

*See also:*

- > Part I. 3: Restrictions and Derogations
- > Part II. 3.1.4: Freedom from Arbitrary Arrest or Detention
- > Part II. 3.1.5: Right to a Fair Trial
- > Part II. 3.1.6: Right to Effective Remedies

### 2.4.1 General Provisions

#### **Vienna 1989** (Questions Relating to Security in Europe: Principles)

(13) (...) [the participating States] will

(...)

(13.4) - effectively ensure the right of the individual to know and act upon his rights and duties in this field, and to that end publish and make accessible all laws, regulations and procedures relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms;

#### **Copenhagen 1990**

(2) [The participating States] are determined to support and advance those principles of justice which form the basis of the rule of law. They consider that the rule of law part II does not mean merely a formal legality which assures regularity and consistency in the achievement and enforcement of democratic order, but justice based on the recognition and full acceptance of the supreme value of the human personality and guaranteed by institutions providing a framework for its fullest expression.

(3) They reaffirm that democracy is an inherent element of the rule of law (...)

(...)

(5) They solemnly declare that among those elements of justice which are essential to the full expression of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings are the following:

(...)

(5.3) - the duty of the government and public authorities to comply with the constitution and to act in a manner consistent with law;

(...)

(5.5) - the activity of the government and the administration as well as that of the judiciary will be exercised in accordance with the system established by law. Respect for that system must be ensured;

(...)

(5.7) - human rights and fundamental freedoms will be guaranteed by law and in accordance with their obligations under international law;

(5.8) - legislation, adopted at the end of a public procedure, and regulations will be published, that being the condition for their applicability. Those texts will be accessible to everyone;

(5.9) - all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law will prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground;

(...)

(5.15) - any person arrested or detained on a criminal charge will have the right, so that the lawfulness of his arrest or detention can be decided, to be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise this function;

(...)

(5.18) - no one will be charged with, tried for or convicted of any criminal offence unless the offence is provided for by a law which defines the elements of the offence with clarity and precision;

(5.19) - everyone will be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law;

(5.20) - considering the important contribution of international instruments in the field of human rights to the rule of law at a national level, the participating States reaffirm that they will consider acceding to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other relevant international instruments, if they have not yet done so.

(5.21) - in order to supplement domestic remedies and better to ensure that the participating States respect the international obligations they have undertaken, the participating States will consider acceding to a regional or global international convention concerning the protection of human rights, such as the European Convention on Human Rights or the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provide for procedures of individual recourse to international bodies.

(...)

(12) The participating States, wishing to ensure greater transparency in the implementation of the commitments undertaken in the Vienna Concluding Document under the heading of the human dimension of the CSCE, decide to accept as a confidence building measure the presence of observers sent by participating States and representatives of non-governmental organizations and other interested persons at proceedings before courts as provided for in national legislation and international law; it is understood that proceedings may only be held in camera in the circumstances

prescribed by law and consistent with obligations under international law and international commitments.

(...)

(24) The participating States will ensure that the exercise of all the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out above will not be subject to any restrictions except those which are provided by law and are consistent with their obligations under international law, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and with their international commitments, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These restrictions have the character of exceptions. The participating States will ensure that these restrictions are not abused and are not applied in an arbitrary manner, but in such a way that the effective exercise of these rights is ensured. Any restriction on rights and freedoms must, in a democratic society, relate to one of the objectives of the applicable law and be strictly proportionate to the aim of that law.

### **Moscow 1991**

(18.1) Legislation will be formulated and adopted as the result of an open process reflecting the will of the people, either directly or through their elected representatives.

(...)

(27) The participating States

(27.1) - express their intention to co-operate in the field of constitutional, administrative, commercial, civil and social welfare laws and their relevant areas, in order to develop, particularly in States where they do not yet exist, legal systems based on respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy;

(27.2) - to this end, envisage the continuation and enhancement of bilateral and multilateral legal and administrative co-operation, *inter alia*, in the following fields:

- development of an efficient administrative system;
- assistance in formulating law and regulations;
- training of administrative and legal staff;
- exchange of legal works and periodicals.

### **Budapest 1994 (Decisions: VIII. The Human Dimension)**

18. The participating States emphasize that all action by public authorities must be consistent with the rule of law, thus guaranteeing legal security for the individual.

*2.4.2 Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Practitioners, and Impartial Operation of the Public Judicial Service*

## **Copenhagen 1990**

(5) [The participating States] solemnly declare that among those elements of justice which are essential to the full expression of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all human beings are the following:

(...)

(5.12) - the independence of judges and the impartial operation of the public judicial service will be ensured;

(5.13) - the independence of legal practitioners will be recognized and protected, in particular as regards conditions for recruitment and practice;

## **Moscow 1991**

(19) The participating States

(19.1) - will respect the internationally recognized standards that relate to the independence of judges and legal practitioners and the impartial operation of the public judicial service including, *inter alia*, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

(19.2) - will, in implementing the relevant standards and commitments, ensure that the independence of the judiciary is guaranteed and enshrined in the constitution or the law of the country and is respected in practice, paying particular attention to the Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary, which, *inter alia*, provide for

(i) prohibiting improper influence on judges;

(ii) preventing revision of judicial decisions by administrative authorities, except for the rights of the competent authorities to mitigate or commute sentences imposed by judges, in conformity with the law;

(iii) protecting the judiciary's freedom of expression and association, subject only to such restrictions as are consistent with its functions;

(iv) ensuring that judges are properly qualified, trained and selected on a non discriminatory basis;

(v) guaranteeing tenure and appropriate conditions of service, including on the matter of promotion of judges, where applicable;

(vi) respecting conditions of immunity;

(vii) ensuring that the disciplining, suspension and removal of judges are determined according to law.

(20) For the promotion of the independence of the judiciary, the participating States will

(20.1) - recognize the important function national and international associations of judges and lawyers can perform in strengthening respect for the independence of their members and in providing education and training on the role of the judiciary and the legal profession in society;

(20.2) - promote and facilitate dialogue, exchanges and co-operation among national associations and other groups interested in ensuring respect for the independence of the judiciary and the protection of lawyers;

(20.3) - co-operate among themselves through, *inter alia*, dialogue, contacts and exchanges in order to identify where problem areas exist concerning the protection of the independence of judges and legal practitioners and to develop ways and means to address and resolve such problems;

(20.4) - co-operate on an ongoing basis in such areas as the education and training of judges and legal practitioners, as well as the preparation and enactment of legislation intended to strengthen respect for their independence and the impartial operation of the public judicial service.

**Istanbul 1999** (Charter for European Security: IV. Our Common Instruments)

45. We shall also promote the development of independent judicial systems that play a key role in providing remedies for human rights violations as well as providing advice and assistance for prison system reforms (...)

*2.4.3 Administration of Justice*

A. Law Enforcement

**Moscow 1991**

(21) The participating States will

(21.1) - take all necessary measures to ensure that law enforcement personnel, when enforcing public order, will act in the public interest, respond to a specific need and pursue a legitimate aim, as well as use ways and means commensurate with the circumstances, which will not exceed the needs of enforcement;

(21.2) - ensure that law enforcement acts are subject to judicial control, that law enforcement personnel are held accountable for such acts, and that due compensation may be sought, according to domestic law, by the victims of acts found to be in violation of the above commitments.

(22) The participating States will take appropriate measures to ensure that education and information regarding the prohibition of excess force by law enforcement personnel as well as relevant international and domestic codes of conduct are included in the training of such personnel.

**Budapest 1994** (Decisions: IV. Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security)

37. The participating States will not use armed forces to limit the peaceful and lawful exercise of their human and civil rights by persons as individuals or as representatives of groups nor to deprive them of their national, religious, cultural, linguistic or ethnic identity.

**Istanbul 1999** (Charter for European Security: IV. Our Common Instruments)

45. (...) The OSCE will also work with other international organizations in the creation of political and legal frameworks within which the police can perform its tasks in accordance with democratic principles and the rule of law.

**Bucharest 2001** (Decisions: Decision No. 9 on Police-Related Activities)

The Ministerial Council,

(...)

Affirming that effective policing is essential to uphold the rule of law and to defend democratic institutions;

(...)

1. Agrees that in developing plans for...and in enhancing OSCE police-related activities (...) the OSCE will:

(...)

- explore and build on the role of police training, particularly integrated police training, in creating police services that can enjoy the confidence of the entire population, and as a confidence-building measure (...)

**B. Treatment of Persons Deprived of Their Liberty**

**Vienna 1989** (Questions Relating to Security in Europe: Principles)

(23) The participating States will

(23.1) - ensure that no one will be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile;

(23.2) - ensure that all individuals in detention or incarceration will be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person;

(23.3) - observe the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners as well as the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials;

(23.4) - prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and take effective legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures to prevent and punish such practices;

(23.5) - consider acceding to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, if they have not yet done so;

(23.6) - protect individuals from any psychiatric or other medical practices that violate human rights and fundamental freedoms and take effective measures to prevent and punish such practices.

(24) (...) In participating States where capital punishment has not been abolished, sentence of death may be imposed only for the most serious crimes in accordance with the law in force at the time of the commission of the crime and not contrary to their international commitments (...)

### **Moscow 1991**

(23) The participating States will treat all persons deprived of their liberty with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person and will respect the internationally recognized standards that relate to the administration of justice and the human rights of detainees.

(23.1) The participating States will ensure that

(i) no one will be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedures as are established by law;

(ii) anyone who is arrested will be informed promptly in a language which he understands of the reason for his arrest, and will be informed of any charges against him;

(iii) any person who has been deprived of his liberty will be promptly informed about his rights according to domestic law;

(iv) any person arrested or detained will have the right to be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to determine the lawfulness of his arrest or detention, and will be released without delay if it is unlawful;

(v) anyone charged with a criminal offence will have the right to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing or, if he has not sufficient means to pay for legal assistance, to be given it free when the interests of justice so require;

(vi) any person arrested or detained will have the right, without undue delay, to notify or to require the competent authority to notify appropriate persons of his choice of his arrest, detention, imprisonment and whereabouts; any restriction in the exercise of this right will be prescribed by law and in accordance with international standards;

(vii) effective measures will be adopted, if this has not already been done, to provide that law enforcement bodies do not take undue advantage of the situation of a detained or imprisoned person for the purpose of compelling him to confess, or otherwise to incriminate himself, or to force him to testify against any other person;

(viii) the duration of any interrogation and the intervals between them will be recorded and certified, consistent with domestic law;

(ix) a detained person or his counsel will have the right to make a request or complaint regarding his treatment, in particular when torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment has been applied, to the authorities responsible for the administration of the place of detention and to higher authorities, and when necessary, to appropriate authorities vested with reviewing or remedial power;

(x) such request or complaint will be promptly dealt with and replied to without undue delay; if the request or complaint is rejected or in case of inordinate delay, the complainant will be entitled to bring it before a judicial or other authority; neither the detained or imprisoned person nor any complainant will suffer prejudice for making a request or complaint;

(xi) anyone who has been the victim of an unlawful arrest or detention will have a legally enforceable right to seek compensation.

(23.2) The participating States will

(i) endeavour to take measures, as necessary, to improve the conditions of individuals in detention or imprisonment;

(ii) pay particular attention to the question of alternatives to imprisonment.

#### *2.4.4 Fulfilment of International Obligations*

**Helsinki 1975** (Questions Relating to Security in Europe: 1.(a) Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States – Principle X)

The participating States will fulfil in good faith their obligations under international law, both those obligations arising from the generally recognized principles and rules of international law and those obligations arising from treaties or other agreements, in conformity with international law, to which they are parties.

In exercising their sovereign rights, including the right to determine their laws and regulations, they will conform with their legal obligations under international law; they will furthermore pay due regard to and implement the provisions in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The participating States confirm that in the event of a conflict between the obligations of the members of the United Nations under the Charter of the United Nations and their obligations under any treaty or other international agreement, their obligations under the Charter will prevail, in accordance with Article 103 of the Charter of the United Nations.