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## **Council of Europe: Mijatovic, need to support human rights defenders in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus**

“It is equally essential that states recognise and publicly acknowledge the essential contribution human rights defenders make to the promotion and protection of groups such as women, children, LGBTI people, migrants and ethnic minorities and refrain from misusing criminal proceedings against human rights defenders for providing humanitarian assistance to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants”. This was said by Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, in a report on a round-table with human rights defenders from across Europe, held in Dublin in October 2022. “States should also guarantee human rights defenders’ effective participation in public affairs and unhindered access to funding, including from foreign sources”. The commissioner also called for greater financial and technological support and protection for human rights defenders in Ukraine to help them document “human rights violations”. She also reiterated the need to better support Russian and Belarusian civil society and human rights defenders. “Unprecedented challenges make the work of human rights defenders ever more crucial to the preservation of the democratic fabric of our societies. Solidarity with and among human rights defenders is more imperative than ever”, she concluded.

Valentina Bombelli