



EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
COUR EUROPÉENNE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

## Official visit by a delegation of the Supreme Court of Albania

Welcome address by Mattias Guyomar

*Strasbourg, 5 March 2026*

*Dear President, Prof. Dr Sadushi,*

*Distinguished members of the Supreme Court of Albania,*

*Dear Judges of the Court, dear Registrars, dear Colleagues,*

On behalf of the judges of the European Court of Human Rights, I warmly welcome your delegation to Strasbourg and the Human Rights Building.

It is a pleasure to host you today. We have a rich programme, with discussions on subsidiarity and the role of national courts in preventing violations of the Convention, and on issues related to pre-trial detention and asset-based measures in criminal proceedings.

Let me thank very warmly your 'national judge', Judge Pavli, *dear Darian*, for your commitment and your help in putting together the programme of the visit. Let me also thank Judges Hüseyinov and Sancin, *dear Latif, dear Vasilka*, as well as Judges of the Supreme Court of Albania: *Vice-President Dr Panda* and *Judge Medja*, for taking the lead in today's thematic discussions.

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Allow me to immediately focus on the question of **subsidiarity** and the role on superior national courts, like the Supreme Court of Albania. Domestic superior court judges – *you* – are our privileged interlocutors. Subsidiarity means that domestic courts, including supreme courts, have the primary responsibility to interpret, secure and implement the rights and freedoms set out in the European Convention. Our Court exercises subsidiary supervision, once the domestic remedies have been exhausted. This shared responsibility is really the driving force of the Convention system. We are all 'Convention judges'.

The practical application of shared responsibility is based on mutual understanding, partnership, and trust. These qualities are best fostered through constant dialogue.

There is, first and foremost, the vital dialogue of case-law between our Court and the national courts, and notably superior courts such as yours: through judgments, advisory opinions, and our Knowledge Sharing platform.

I wish to highlight requests for advisory opinions under Protocol No. 16 as a particularly useful way of strengthening judicial dialogue. Protocol No. 16 – the ‘Dialogue Protocol’, as it is also known, has been ratified by 26 member States including by Albania, where it entered into force in 2018. I would very much like to encourage you to consider making use of this tool. And in this respect, I will have to leave you early this morning for the delivery of an advisory opinion at the request of the Ukrainian Supreme Court.

In addition to ‘dialogue through judgments’, the principle of shared responsibility finds its expression in the institutional cooperation between courts. A prime example of such judicial dialogue is our Superior Courts Network, which today has 112 members – including, since 2016, Albania’s two top courts. With 31 comparative law contributions, your court has been a very active member. I wish to greet *Ms Emirjam Ahmetaga*, your Focal Point in our Network and a member of the editorial board of the Network’s anniversary book.

This institutional cooperation is most effective when it is reinforced by strong personal connections. That is why visits by delegations such as yours are particularly valuable. Last July we also hosted here at the Court a delegation from Albania’s Constitutional Court, headed by President Zaçaj. We should constantly nurture such personal ties that bind us together.

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From the Court’s judicial perspective, Albania is not a country with many cases – about 200 per year, most inadmissible. There are also very few requests made for interim measures.

This is no doubt thanks to the Convention being an integral part of Albania’s legal order and directly applicable by courts and national authorities. The Albanian Constitution, as interpreted by the Constitutional Court, has given a **constitutional status** to the Convention.

But, in no small part, this is also the result of your efforts as national judges. In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, human rights complaints are most effectively dealt with “at home”.

This is well illustrated, for instance, by the case *Leka v. Albania* (2024), where the Court found no violation of Article 6. It observed that the Court does not call into question the outcome of a trial or engage in an assessment of facts or evidence as “these matters, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, are the domain of the domestic courts”.

For subsidiarity to work well, domestic legal systems must work efficiently. Here, I must say that the effort of the Supreme Court of Albania to reduce its backlog of cases, from 36,000 in 2016 to around 10,000 today, is nothing less than impressive. Our Court expressly commended this extraordinary achievement in the case of *ARB shpk and Others v. Albania*, 2025 (in para. 191).

I want to note that last year, through the collective commitment of our judges and the Registry under Registrar Marialena Tsirli, our Court also managed to reduce its backlog of pending cases by 11%, down to 53,450, the lowest stock in 20 years.

Backlogs and length of proceedings are, of course, also a major concern for our Court, and this is why I have made efficiency one of the priorities of my Presidency for the coming years.

However, as President Sadushi has recently said, “*the quality of justice depends not only on trial speed or reducing case backlogs but also on well-reasoned, clear, and predictable decisions.*”

For our Court, responsibility implies explaining our judicial mission. It is not a matter of justifying ourselves, but of presenting and clarifying our activity and our case-law which, whatever the matter at hand, always concerns human rights and human dignity. This is to show that we are a Court for everyone, a Court for all.

It is an essential corollary of judicial independence.

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On this note, I would like to conclude by sharing with you a matter that is very close to my heart now.

End of last year, we marked the 75th anniversary of the European Convention of Human Rights at a solemn ceremony held at the Court, in the company of *Vice-President, Dr Panda*.

Today, we are in an entirely different reality. The Convention system, the values that underpin it, and the rights that it protects, are openly called into question. International law is being broken apart before our eyes. A growing narrative challenges the rule of law and pits judges against democracy.

This type of narrative endangers the judicial decision-making process, exposing judges to an increased risk of harm.

On behalf of the entire Court, I would like to express my deepest sympathy for the tragic death of your dear colleague, Judge **Astrit Kalaja** of the Tirana Court of Appeal, fatally shot during a courtroom hearing in last October.<sup>1</sup>

His death is a tragic reminder of how much today, more than ever, we need **judicial unity and solidarity**. I have made this call for unity the main theme of my speech at the solemn opening of the judicial year on 30 January.

We need judicial unity that translates into **protection and mutual assistance**.

As members of the judiciary, we should all stand together. For the sake of protecting judges’ physical integrity and dignity, this goes without saying. But also, to protect judicial independence, both institutional and individual, as an essential guarantee of the rule of law.

Because without judges, there is no rule of law.

It is absolutely unacceptable to seek to undermine the integrity of a court by attacking its members. As it is unacceptable to subject the judges of the ICC to international sanctions because of decisions they have taken in the course of their judicial duties. That is why it is so important that our Court demonstrates solidarity with judges of the ICC. Seven judges from our Court will go to the Hague to take part in a joint conference this Friday.

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<sup>1</sup> [Albanian judge shot dead in court by man during trial](#) (BBC)

We must be firm in reacting to every instance of threats, intimidation and hate speech directed against members of the judiciary. Because hate speech always has consequences. And sadly, it often leads to violence.

Individual threats and acts of violence may well be directed against specific, individual judges. However, the aim and effect of these threats and acts of violence is to cause lasting damage to entire institutions and, eventually, the entire system of justice.

President Sadushi's inspiring words, spoken last October,<sup>2</sup> resonate loudly:

*"No act of violence shall bend justice.*

*No threat shall deter the judge from performing his duty with integrity.*

*No political or public pressure shall compromise the independence of judgment."*

I wish to add to this: the absence of any political pressure on courts or their judges is a prerequisite for the integrity of our judicial mission and for keeping democracy alive.

*Dear Colleagues,*

Exchanges like the one today bring us closer together.

Once again, I would like to thank you for coming to the Court and giving us the opportunity to build and strengthen our dialogue and trust.

It now my pleasure to hand over the floor to President Sadushi.

*Dear President,* the floor is yours.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rechtersvoorrechters.nl/uploads/2025/10/Address-of-the-Chief-Justice-of-the-Supreme-Court-1.pdf>