



**“Massive Human Rights Violations in Times of War:
Legal, Political and Ethical Dilemmas for Europe”**

*Dedicated to the Human Rights Day and
the 30th Anniversary of Accession of Ukraine to the Council of Europe*

CONFERENCE

**« Violations massives des droits humains en temps de guerre :
dilemmes juridiques, politiques et éthiques pour l'Europe »**

*Dédié à la Journée des droits de l'homme et
au 30^e anniversaire de l'adhésion de l'Ukraine au Conseil de l'Europe*

[Registration link](#)

10 December 2025 - 10 décembre 2025

Lieu d'Europe

8 rue Boecklin
67000, Strasbourg, France

“Massive Human Rights Violations in Times of War: Legal, Political and Ethical Dilemmas for Europe”

Synopsis and background to the discussions

Russia’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine has generated a pattern of systematic human rights violations that coherently align with recognised indicators of genocidal intent. The objective extends beyond territorial acquisition: it seeks to dismantle Ukraine’s institutional capacity, extinguish its statehood, and erode the Ukrainian people’s existence as a distinct political nation. These dynamics directly challenge the stability of the European security architecture and the credibility of the international human rights system.

This conference focuses on two interlinked elements that reshape understandings of atrocity crimes:

- **Environmental Devastation (Ecocide):** the large-scale, deliberate degradation of ecosystems, water and energy infrastructure, agricultural land, industrial sites, and urban environments has created enduring risks to public health, food security, and regional stability. The breadth and intentionality of this harm expose gaps in existing legal classifications and accountability mechanisms for environmental crimes in armed conflict;
- **Cultural Erasure (Cultural Genocide):** systematic attacks on cultural institutions, heritage sites, archives, educators, artists, and linguistic identity are aimed at erasing Ukraine’s cultural continuity and weakening societal resilience. The conflict demonstrates how cultural destruction functions as a strategic instrument of domination, revealing limitations within current international protective regimes for cultural heritage.

Together, environmental devastation and cultural erasure undermine two foundational rights that structure modern democratic societies: the right to a safe, liveable environment and the right to preserve cultural identity. Their erosion produces cascading effects across civil, political, economic, and social rights, thereby threatening the integrity of national and regional governance systems.

International community and European states have mobilised a multi-layered response—legal action before international courts, targeted sanctions, political backing for Ukraine’s European trajectory, and significant humanitarian support to Ukraine. However, the evolving nature and scale of violations raise critical policy and research questions requiring coordinated, cross-sectoral reflection:

- How should evidence-gathering, qualification, and prosecution of atrocity crimes be adapted to address environmental destruction and cultural erasure within existing international legal frameworks? Are these frameworks sufficient or should they be enhanced?
- What enhancements to sanctions regimes are required to increase costs for actors engaged in environmental devastation, cultural suppression, and forced assimilation?
- How can a European-led reconstruction framework embed environmental restoration, cultural recovery, and institutional resilience from the outset?
- What targeted support should be prioritised for Ukrainian civil society, cultural institutions, and environmental defenders to sustain national resilience and accountability efforts?
- What strategic communication tools are needed to effectively counter denialism, disinformation, and narrative manipulation surrounding the war?
- What preventative architectures—legal, political, and institutional—must be strengthened to ensure that similar patterns of violations cannot recur within Europe or its neighbourhood?

Addressing these questions is essential for reinforcing Europe’s normative commitments, strengthening the international rules-based order, and ensuring that accountability, reconstruction, and long-term security are approached as mutually reinforcing objectives. At stake is not only the survival of a nation, but the integrity of the European project, currently defended with arms by Ukraine and the Ukrainians, and the future credibility of international human rights protection.

Programme of the conference

16.00 Opening of the exhibition *Empowered* («Спроможні») at the lobby of the *Lieu d'Europe* (screening of visual materials) and registration of the participants

17.00 Opening remarks:

- *Mykola Tochytskyi*, Permanent Representative of Ukraine before the Council of Europe, Minister of Culture of Ukraine (2024 - 2025)
- *Pap Ndiaye*, Permanent Representative of France before the Council of Europe, Minister of Education and Youth of France (2022 - 2023)
- *Veronique Bertholle*, Adjointe à la maire de Strasbourg
- *Aminat Suleymanova*, Vice-President of the Association MICT France-Ukraine, advocate

17.15 – **Key note speech: “Massive Human Rights Violations in Times of War: Legal, Political and Ethical Dilemmas for Europe”**

17.45 *Maksym Butkevych*, journalist, human rights defender, laureate of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, former political prisoner in Russia

Moderator: *Aminat Suleymanova*, Vice-President of the Association MICT France-Ukraine, advocate

17.45 – **Intentional destruction of the Ukrainian cultural heritage, cultural erasure and cultural genocide against Ukraine: what kind of reaction of international community to atrocities committed by Russia?**

18.15 *Mykola Tochytskyi*, Permanent Representative of Ukraine before the Council of Europe, Minister of Culture of Ukraine (2024 - 2025)

Moderator: *Christian Jacques*, Associate Professor, University of Strasbourg

18.15 – **Ecocide as a tool of war used by Russia against Ukraine. What kind of action on behalf of the international community?**

18.45 *Oksana Pokalchuk*, Co-Executive Director, Head of Advocacy, Truth Hounds

Moderator: *Peggy Ducoulombier*, Professor, Vice-dean responsible for international relations, Faculty of Law, University of Strasbourg

18.45 – **Vérité et Justice pour l'Ukraine (Truth and Justice for Ukraine)**

19.15 *Antoine Arjakovsky*, Doctor of history studies, Co-Director of the department of research, Politics and Religions, Collège des Bernardins

Moderator: *Pavlo Pushkar*, PhD in law, lecturer Ukrainian Catholic University (Lviv) – University of Strasbourg

19.15 – **Wrapping up the discussions:** *Pavlo Pushkar*, PhD in law, lecturer Ukrainian Catholic University (Lviv) – University of Strasbourg

19.30