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## Inspection Visit to Tartu Prison

Dear Director of Tartu Prison, Minister of Justice and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Estonia,  
Minister of Justice and Head of the Prison and Probation Service of the Kingdom of Sweden

One of the tasks of the Chancellor of Justice is to regularly inspect the activities of places of detention and the conditions in which people are detained (sections 1(7) and 27 of the [Chancellor of Justice Act](#); Article 3 of the [Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#)). The Chancellor of Justice must therefore also regularly inspect the detention conditions and treatment of prisoners transferred from Sweden to Estonia under the [Agreement between the Republic of Estonia and the Kingdom of Sweden on the Enforcement in the Republic of Estonia of Prison Sentences of the Kingdom of Sweden](#) (hereinafter also referred to as the prison lease agreement).

Advisers to the Chancellor of Justice inspected the detention conditions of prisoners transferred to Tartu Prison on 27 August 2026. The inspection visit was unannounced. We would like to thank the prison for its cooperation, smooth organisation and the professional explanations provided by prison officers both during and after the inspection visit.

At the time of the inspection visit, fifteen Swedish prisoners were being held in Tartu Prison. Four prisoners had been transferred to the prison on 18 August 2026 and eleven on 25 August 2026. The Chancellor's advisers spoke privately with eight prisoners, met with prison officers, toured the prison premises and examined selected documents.

The prisoners confirmed that no means of restraint had been used on them during their journey to Estonia and that they had been able to drink, eat and use the toilet during the journey. On arrival at the prison, the prisoners agreed to undergo a medical examination and were satisfied that the medication they needed was provided promptly.

Office of the Chancellor of Justice

The information gathered during the inspection visit nevertheless indicates that, before being transferred to Estonia, the prisoners had not been given sufficient information about the conditions of detention at Tartu Prison and the rules applicable in the prison. At Tartu Prison, the language barrier makes it more difficult for them to understand the information provided and to communicate with prison officers and other staff. The prisoners were concerned about how they could keep in contact with their families and children, as they considered telephone charges to be high and, in August, video calls had not yet been made available to them. According to the prisoners, their families' financial circumstances do not allow them to travel to Estonia for visits. The inspection visit also revealed several differences in the organisation of everyday life in Swedish and Estonian prisons that require further analysis. Consideration should also be given to making cell furnishings safer and prisoners should be provided with privacy in shared washing facilities. A further issue raised during the inspection visit was how Muslim prisoners can practise their religion, including meeting an Islamic chaplain and participating in communal prayers.

These issues can only be resolved through cooperation between Estonia and Sweden. We are therefore also forwarding the observations set out in this summary to the competent authorities of the Kingdom of Sweden.

## **1. Preparation for and information concerning the transfer**

Most of the prisoners who spoke with the advisers to the Chancellor of Justice said that they had not consented to being transferred to Estonia. According to them, they were notified of the transfer only shortly in advance – in some cases approximately two weeks beforehand and in others only a few days beforehand. The prisoners had an opportunity to submit objections, but in their view the responses they received were general and brief, in some cases consisting of only a couple of sentences. The prisoners considered that they had not in fact been given a genuine opportunity to defend their position and that their individual circumstances had not been taken into account when the decision was made.

The prisoners explained that, while held in Swedish prisons, they had allegedly been well-behaved and motivated prisoners. They therefore believe that the purpose of transferring them to Estonia is not to support their reintegration into society, but rather to present the prison lease arrangement as a success. They perceive the transfer to Estonia as a form of double punishment, and said that their previous motivation to work towards a law-abiding life had disappeared. Concerns were also expressed that dissatisfaction among prisoners could lead to more serious problems in the prison, particularly as the number of prisoners transferred from Sweden increases.

All the prisoners who spoke with the advisers to the Chancellor of Justice stated that, while in Swedish prisons, they had received information about detention conditions in Estonia mainly from an information leaflet. They considered that the information provided in Sweden differed significantly from the actual conditions in the Estonian prison. Some prisoners claimed that they had been assured in Sweden that they would continue serving their sentence at Tartu Prison under Swedish law. They also said they had been told that prisoners at Tartu Prison would enjoy at least the same benefits as, or even more benefits than, prisoners in Swedish prisons. According to the prisoners, this is not the case.

In addition, it was not clear to the prisoners on what matters, to whom and by what procedure they were entitled to submit requests and complaints while being held in Tartu Prison.

The Chancellor of Justice does not know and cannot confirm what information was provided to the prisoners in Sweden or how it was communicated to them. However, all the prisoners had a similar understanding and perception of the information they had received.

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2012\)12](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning foreign prisoners provides that foreign prisoners must be given, in a language they understand, information about their rights and duties, as well as about the prison regime and internal rules, procedures for making requests and complaints, and access to legal advice and assistance (Rules 15.1 and 15.3). The right of foreign prisoners to receive information in a language they understand, both in writing and orally, is also emphasised in Rules 54–55 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners ([the Mandela Rules](#)) and in Rule 30.1 of Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the European Prison Rules ([the European Prison Rules](#)).

In the context of a prison lease arrangement, the obligation to provide information is not limited to the time of arrival at the prison and the period thereafter but also extends to the period preceding the transfer. In the context of prison leasing, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) has emphasised that prisoners who are to be transferred to a prison abroad should be informed of the transfer in good time, i.e. at least two weeks in advance, and should be provided with adequate information about the conditions of detention in that prison ([CPT report concerning Tilburg Prison, 2012](#), para. 8). The purpose is to ensure that, before the transfer, the prisoner knows under what conditions and according to what rules they will continue serving their sentence.

**In order to ensure the effective protection of prisoners' rights, it would be important for the competent Swedish authorities to provide prisoners with sufficient information about their transfer to Estonia and the conditions of detention at Tartu Prison. It is important that prisoners have sufficient time to familiarise themselves with the information and an opportunity to ask questions.**

**It would also be helpful to provide visual material, such as photographs and videos, showing the conditions of detention at Tartu Prison. This would give prisoners a clearer idea of the prison environment and the organisation of daily life. Incomplete or inaccurate information may increase uncertainty and dissatisfaction, create misconceptions and make it more difficult to adjust to the new conditions of detention. This, in turn, may foster a negative attitude towards the transfer to Estonia, reduce prisoners' willingness to comply with the rules in force at Tartu Prison and increase security risks. It may also hinder preparations for reintegration into society, towards which both the individual concerned and the Swedish Prison and Probation Service may often have worked for years.**

**Prisoners should also have easy access to information about the available complaints procedures. To this end, the competent Swedish and Estonian authorities could consider jointly preparing an information sheet explaining on what matters, to whom and in what manner a prisoner may turn if they consider that their rights have been violated.**

## **2. Right to receive information in a language understood by the prisoner**

The prisoners who spoke with the advisers to the Chancellor of Justice had some command of English. However, there is reason to believe that several prisoners who were being held in Tartu Prison at the time of the inspection visit do not understand information provided in English well and find it difficult to communicate with prison officers in English, particularly when more complex matters are discussed. The prisoners claimed that, in their view, not all officers speak fluent English either. As a result, they communicate relatively little with the officers, and the

officers have found it difficult to answer the prisoners' questions. According to the prisoners, this increases the risk of misunderstandings, which may lead to unnecessary conflicts.

For example, one prisoner was prohibited from using an item that some other prisoners were allowed to use. The prisoner perceived this difference in treatment as hostile and believed that it was related to his skin colour and/or origin. Subsequent discussions with prison officers revealed that he had not been allowed to take the item into his cell because security labels first had to be attached to it. The allegation of discriminatory conduct by prison officers was not substantiated. The situation, and the unnecessary tension it caused, could have been avoided if the circumstances had been explained to the prisoner promptly and in a language he understood.

The prisoners also specifically noted that they would have liked to understand better the explanations given during the admission procedures following their arrival at the prison and during the medical examination.

It was further noted that prison officers had so far not used translation applications when communicating with prisoners. An interpreter was present during the medical examination, but the interpretation was from Estonian into English rather than into Swedish. For example, one prisoner was found during the examination to have a heart-related health problem. The prisoner stated that he would like to receive more information about his health condition in Swedish and to have an opportunity to ask questions about this complex matter and receive answers that he could fully understand.

The international guidelines and recommendations referred to in section 1 of this summary emphasise that foreign prisoners have the right to receive information in a language they understand. Article 14.3 of the [prison lease agreement](#) provides for the right to use the assistance of an interpreter. It is important to note that the language understood by the prisoner and/or the language into which interpretation is provided need not be English, which is designated as the working language of the prison under Article 14.1 of the [prison lease agreement](#). In its [2012 report on Tilburg Prison](#), the CPT likewise pointed out (para. 35) that in a leased prison, information must be provided in the languages habitually in use in the prison (which, in Tilburg Prison, also included French and Arabic), and that providing information only in the prison's working language is not sufficient.

The [Mandela Rules](#) (Rule 61.2), the [European Prison Rules](#) (Rule 38.3), and Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2012\)12](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Rules 8, 21.1, 21.3, 21.5 and 31.4) all emphasise that foreign prisoners must be provided with competent interpretation. Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2012\)12](#) specifically notes that interpretation may be particularly important during medical consultations (Rule 31.4).

**Tartu Prison, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs, should consider how to ensure that Swedish prisoners receive the necessary information in a language they understand, both upon arrival at the prison and thereafter. This may require the use of translation applications as well as professional interpretation services.**

### **3. Information on progress towards the objectives of imprisonment and future options**

Several prisoners said that, in the Swedish prison, they had had a case manager with whom they could regularly discuss the progress of their imprisonment, their progress towards transfer to a less restrictive prison regime, and opportunities to apply for alternative ways of serving their sentence. It was not clear to the prisoners whether and how this contact would continue at Tartu Prison, or whom they could approach in future to discuss progress towards the objectives of their imprisonment and preparations for release.

**Consideration should be given to how prisoners can continue to receive consistent support and counselling after their transfer to Tartu Prison. At present, prisoners do not know with whom they can discuss matters relating to their imprisonment, and this may make it more difficult for them to prepare for reintegration into society. It would be worth exploring whether the case managers who worked with them in Swedish prisons could continue to counsel prisoners transferred to Tartu Prison, for example by telephone or video call, or whether another solution should be found to ensure that prisoners are able, when necessary and if they so wish, to contact a competent person in Sweden concerning matters relating to their individual case.**

#### **4. Suitability for transfer and the rights of the child**

Point 3.C.20 of Annex A to the [Memorandum of Cooperation](#), concluded pursuant to Article 4 of the [prison lease agreement](#), provides that the Swedish party must assess whether a prisoner meets the conditions for transfer to an Estonian prison. In doing so, account must also be taken of the prisoner's ties to Sweden and family relationships.

The information gathered during the inspection visit raises questions as to how thoroughly the family ties of the Swedish prisoners transferred to Tartu Prison in August, as well as the rights and interests of their children, were assessed.

Several prisoners who spoke with the advisers to the Chancellor of Justice stated that their family members lived in Sweden and that, before their transfer to Estonia, they had regularly communicated and met with them. According to the prisoners, the transfer to Estonia has made communication with their family members considerably more difficult and visits impossible.

One younger prisoner said that he was very close to his mother and his two minor sisters. According to him, the transfer to Estonia has been very difficult both for him and for his family, because his family had been a major source of support and had encouraged him to begin living a law-abiding life. Another prisoner stated that he had a child of approximately ten years of age in Sweden and that, before being transferred to Estonia, he had hoped to reach an agreement with the child's mother that would have enabled the child to visit him in prison. According to him, the transfer to Estonia has made such a visit impossible. A third prisoner said that his approximately two-and-a-half-year-old child lived about 20 minutes away from the Swedish prison where he had been serving his sentence, and that he had regularly seen his child in prison once a week since the child was three months old. The prisoner was very concerned that his relationship with the child would be irreparably damaged and that the child would become estranged from him.

To the knowledge of the Chancellor of Justice, the Europe-wide network Children of Prisoners Europe ([COPE](#)) sent an official letter to the Estonian and Swedish ministries of justice, drawing the attention of both countries to the fact that prison leasing concerns not only the rights of people held in prison, but also the rights of their children. According to information available to the Chancellor of Justice, both the Estonian and Swedish ministries assured COPE that, in the context of prison leasing, the best interests of the child would be treated as a primary consideration and children's right to maintain regular and direct contact with their imprisoned parent would be safeguarded.

In monitoring discussions concerning prison leasing, the Chancellor of Justice repeatedly drew the attention of the Estonian Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs to the fact that transfer to Tartu Prison could have a detrimental effect on prisoners' family relationships and, in particular, could adversely affect the rights and interests of prisoners' children. In this connection, the Chancellor of Justice also referred to the fact that, in 2023, the United Nations Committee

against Torture (CAT), in its report concerning Denmark's plan to lease prison places in Kosovo, expressed concern about the possible impact on prisoners' family ties ([CAT/C/DNK/CO/8](#), paras. 16–17). The weakening and/or severing of family ties was also confirmed by Norway's experience when Norway leased prison places at Norgerhaven Prison in the Netherlands. In its [2016 report](#), the Norwegian Parliamentary Ombudsman noted that very few family members visited prisoners in the Dutch prison. The main obstacles were the long distance and high travel costs (section 8.6).

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)5](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning children with imprisoned parents emphasises that children should generally be able to visit an imprisoned parent on a weekly basis and that very young children should, where appropriate, be allowed even more frequent visits (Rule 17). In its [2024 report on Estonia](#), the CPT likewise recommended that visits should be allowed every week (para. 78). Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2012\)12](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning foreign prisoners emphasises that states should take measures to enable foreign prisoners to maintain regular and meaningful contact with their children (Rule 22.7). It is important to note in this context that video calls are an additional means of communication, not a substitute for face-to-face contact ([CM/Rec\(2018\)5](#), Rule 25).

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has also addressed a child's right to maintain contact with an imprisoned parent. In [Deltuva v. Lithuania](#) (judgment of 14 June 2022), a case concerning a violation of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the ECtHR assessed visiting rights from the perspective of the rights of the child and found that the absence of visits had had an adverse effect on the child. In that judgment, the Court also referred to Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)5](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning children with imprisoned parents. In addition, the ECtHR has on several occasions, in differing circumstances, found a violation of Article 8 of the ECHR where a prisoner was required to serve their sentence far away from their family (see, for example, the ECtHR judgment of 23 October 2014 in [Vintman v. Ukraine](#), paras. 79–83, and the judgment of 25 July 2013 in [Khodorkovskiy and Lebedev v. Russia](#), paras. 835–838).

**Only the competent Swedish authorities can establish whether, when assessing the suitability for transfer of all prisoners who were being held in Tartu Prison on 27 August 2026, due account was taken of their family ties and whether the best interests of the prisoners' children, as well as the children's right to maintain regular communication and direct contact with their imprisoned parent, were properly taken into consideration.**

## **5. Means of communication and related costs**

The prisoners who spoke with the advisers to the Chancellor of Justice stated that, in their view, calling family members from Estonia, particularly making calls to third countries, is more expensive than calling from Sweden. As a result, they may no longer be able to stay in contact with their family members as frequently as before. At the time of the inspection visit, prisoners transferred from Sweden to Estonia did not yet have access to video calls.

All the prisoners who spoke with the advisers to the Chancellor of Justice said that, because of travel costs and other expenses related to visits, including the fee charged for a visit, their family members would not be able to travel to Estonia. According to most of the prisoners, neither they nor their family members had been informed whether financial assistance was available to cover travel and other costs associated with visits and, if so, how such assistance could be applied for. Only one prisoner who took part in the discussions mentioned that he had heard that such assistance might be available.

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)5](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning children with imprisoned parents states that states should support children with imprisoned parents and their families in dealing with their particular circumstances and specific needs and in maintaining contact with the imprisoned parent. Such support may include financial and logistical assistance (Rule 6). The Recommendation also provides that imprisoned parents should be assisted with the costs of communicating with their children where their financial circumstances do not allow them to bear those costs themselves (Rule 25). The [European Prison Rules](#) likewise impose a positive obligation on the state to assist prisoners in maintaining contact with the outside world (Rule 24.5). The same principle is reflected in Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2012\)12](#) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe concerning foreign prisoners (Rules 22.6 and 35.2.c). Read together with Rules 6 and 25 of Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2018\)5](#), this may also entail financial assistance.

The Chancellor of Justice has previously pointed out, in the [summary of the 2025 inspection visit to Tallinn Prison](#) (section 3), that foreign nationals held in Estonian prisons face difficulties in maintaining contact with their family members and children.

The Chancellor of Justice has also repeatedly and over a long period drawn the attention of the Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs to the fact that requiring either the prisoner or the person coming for a long-term visit to bear the costs of that visit does not facilitate visits ([summary of the 2020 inspection visit to Tartu Prison](#), section 6.3; [summary of the 2022 inspection visit to Tallinn Prison](#), section 4; [summary of the 2023 inspection visit to Tartu Prison](#), section 3.3; [summary of the 2024 inspection visit to Viru Prison](#), section 2.3; [summary of the 2025 inspection visit to Tallinn Prison](#), section 1.6.1). Requiring payment of the costs of a long-term visit turns the right to receive visits into a privilege that less well-off families cannot afford, or can afford only rarely. Such a requirement may have a particularly significant impact on a child who, because of the fee, is unable to maintain regular and direct contact with an imprisoned parent (see Article 9(3) of the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and section 143(1) of the [Family Law Act](#)).

It is entirely foreseeable that, for the families and children of Swedish prisoners, travel and accommodation expenses and other costs associated with travelling to Estonia may constitute an even greater obstacle than the requirement to bear the costs of a long-term visit itself.

**The competent Estonian authorities should find a solution to facilitate prisoners' telephone contact with their family members and to make video visits available. The Estonian Ministry of Justice and Digital Affairs should prepare the necessary legislative amendments to abolish the requirement to pay the costs associated with long-term visits.**

**Care should be taken to ensure that information about visits, including information on financial assistance available in connection with visits, is readily accessible to prisoners transferred to Estonia and to their family members.**

## **6. Living conditions**

The prisoners were dissatisfied with the fact that the two televisions in cells at Tartu Prison are positioned next to each other. According to the prisoners, in Swedish prisons, televisions are placed on the wall opposite the beds so that cellmates can watch television without disturbing one another. Although prisoners are permitted to use headphones, they find it disturbing to watch two different programmes at the same time on adjacent screens. The prisoners considered that this situation could easily lead to conflicts.

Several prisoners pointed out that they did not feel safe sleeping in the upper bunk because it had no guard rail. They said that they were afraid of falling out of bed while asleep and acknowledged that this was disturbing their sleep. Lack of sleep may have an adverse effect on a person's mental health (see also the discussion of prisoners' sleep problems in the [summary of the Chancellor of Justice's 2025 inspection visit to Tallinn Prison](#), section 2). The prisoners explained that they had informed prison officers of their concerns and had been placed alone in cells where they could use the lower bunk. According to the prisoners, however, the problem may arise again once more prisoners arrive and two people are accommodated in each cell.

The prison has a duty to protect the life and health of people held there (sections 16 and 28 of the [Constitution of the Republic of Estonia](#)) and to ensure their safety in prison (section 66(1) of the [Imprisonment Act](#)). This means, among other things, that the prison must provide a safe physical environment and reduce reasonably foreseeable risks that could endanger a person's life or health, for example by causing injury. Fulfilling this obligation may also require prison furnishings to be made safer.

**The competent Estonian authorities should assess whether the beds in cells at Tartu Prison and other Estonian prisons are sufficiently safe and, where necessary, take measures to reduce the risk of falling from an upper bunk. This may require the installation of guard rails on the beds. Consideration should also be given to repositioning the televisions in cells so that the simultaneous use of two televisions does not cause excessive disturbance to cellmates.**

## **7. Ensuring privacy while showering**

The prisoners who spoke with the advisers to the Chancellor of Justice pointed out that the washing room in the accommodation sector has three shower heads positioned close to one another and intended for use by approximately 40 prisoners. The prisoners considered that their privacy while showering was not adequately protected because there are no partitions between the shower areas. As a result, they currently shower one at a time. The prisoners explained that when there are seven or eight prisoners in the sector, it is possible for them to shower individually, but this becomes very difficult when there are more prisoners. It is not realistic to expect nearly 40 prisoners to be able to use the shower room one at a time every day.

The Chancellor of Justice has previously drawn prisons' attention to the need to ensure prisoners' privacy in shared washing facilities by separating individual shower areas (see, for example, the [summary of the 2017 inspection visit to Tallinn Prison](#), section 2.3). The CPT has also made recommendations to several countries concerning the separation of shower areas (see, most recently, the [CPT's 2024 recommendations concerning Serbia](#), para. 57).

**Tartu Prison should ensure prisoners' privacy while showering. To this end, the shower areas should be separated from one another by suitable partitions and/or curtains.**

## **8. Observance of religious beliefs**

Muslim prisoners noted that they had not yet had an opportunity to meet with an Islamic chaplain or to take part in communal prayer.

Prison officers acknowledged that prisoners must be given an opportunity to meet their religious needs. However, it remained unclear whether arranging the involvement of Islamic chaplains is the responsibility of the Estonian or the Swedish authorities.

Under the [European Prison Rules](#), prisoners' freedom of thought, conscience and religion must be respected and, as far as practicable, the prison regime should be organised so as to allow prisoners to practise their religion and to attend services or meetings led by approved representatives of their religion or beliefs (Rules 29.1–29.2). The same principles are set out in Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2012\)12](#) concerning foreign prisoners (Rules 30.1 and 30.2).

The [Commentary to the European Prison Rules](#) emphasises that, where possible, prisons should provide places where representatives of different religions and beliefs can hold services and meetings, and should allow approved religious representatives to conduct regular services and activities. Such approved representatives should be permitted to hold regular services and other activities and to visit members of their faith in prison in private in order to provide spiritual support (Part II, Freedom of thought, conscience and religion). Similar recommendations are contained in the Council of Europe [Guidelines](#) for prison and probation services regarding radicalisation and violent extremism (paras. 24–25). A failure to allow a prisoner to meet with a representative of their religion may, in certain circumstances, amount to a violation of the right protected by Article 9 of the ECHR (see, for example, the ECtHR judgment of 23 February 2016 in [Mozer v. the Republic of Moldova and Russia](#), paras. 197–198).

The Council of Europe [Handbook](#) for prison and probation services regarding radicalisation and violent extremism also states that respect for prisoners' religious identity can contribute to rehabilitation and help reduce violent extremism. Considerable care and sensitivity should be taken to ensure that religious practice is not equated per se with interest or involvement in violent extremism (p. 86).

In its judgment of 14 June 2022 in [Abdullah Yalçın v. Türkiye \(no. 2\)](#), the European Court of Human Rights held that Islamic religious practices, such as prayer performed both individually and together with others, including Friday communal prayer, fall within the scope of protection of Article 9 of the ECHR (para. 24). Although stricter rules in high-security prisons may entail more extensive restrictions on rights protected by Article 9, the necessity of such restrictions must be assessed in the light of the specific circumstances of each case (para. 32).

In that case, the authorities had not carried out an individual risk assessment of the applicant, including an assessment of whether he posed a specific security risk, had previously behaved violently, had attempted to escape from prison or had otherwise breached prison rules (para. 32). Nor had they sufficiently assessed whether, in the particular circumstances, a gathering of prisoners for Friday communal prayer could create a security risk justifying treatment different from that of other gatherings of prisoners, for example for rehabilitation activities (para. 33). The ECtHR also considered insufficient the authorities' reasoning that the prison lacked suitable premises for Friday communal prayer. In that regard, the applicant pointed out that the prison had premises used for other gatherings: for example, prisoners met once a week in a designated room for sports activities (para. 18).

The Court concluded that the authorities had not adequately balanced the competing interests or provided relevant and sufficient reasons in a manner consistent with the positive obligations arising under Article 9 of the ECHR to ensure that the applicant could manifest his religion in community with others, that is, by participating in Friday communal prayer in prison. The Court therefore found a violation of Article 9 of the ECHR.

**In view of the above, the competent Estonian authorities, together with the corresponding Swedish authorities, should consider jointly how best to ensure that prisoners' religious needs are met. This includes, among other things, resolving whether and in what manner Muslim prisoners can meet with an Islamic chaplain and how they can be provided with an opportunity to participate in communal prayers.**

Please provide feedback on the observations and recommendations by 4 December 2026.

Yours respectfully,

*/Signed digitally/*

Olari Koppel

Deputy Chancellor and Director of the Office of the Chancellor of Justice  
performing the duties of the Chancellor of Justice

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