



## Police brutality and increase of extremism within police forces in Europe

*ARDI Vice-President Pollak says “We cannot point at the others and turn a blind eye when it occurs in the EU. Police brutality and presence of extremism within the law enforcement have no place in Europe”*

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More than two years ago, a businessman Mr Jozef Chovanec, a Slovak national was arrested after causing disturbance on a Ryanair flight at Brussels South Charleroi Airport. He was incarcerated in a police cell and died three days later in a hospital. Just recently, media released a footage with shocking images revealing horrendous behaviour of police officers towards Mr Chovanec during his custody. The footage shows Mr Chovanec with a blanket over his head and with his hands and feet tied. One police officer sitting on Chovanec’ rib cage for 18 minutes. Another one laughing. The third one doing a Nazi salute.

This is an outrageous act of **police officers’ brutality. An unspeakable inhuman treatment** led to death of an innocent person. Such behavior has nothing to do with police mission - to protect and serve citizens. **This manifestation of extremism in the officers’ behaviour is deeply worrying and simply not acceptable** in any law enforcement agency in any Member State and must be condemned.

Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) [report on Portugal from 2018](#) includes a whole chapter on police brutality. It also says that the level of police brutality towards afro-descendants increased in recent years. The same applies to Roma citizens who often suffer injuries during police raid and face inhuman treatment. In France in 2017, a [poll](#) about radicalization of vote of security forces showed that they increasingly vote for far-right parties. In Germany, a fresh debate started over the presence of far-right sympathizers inside its security forces too. In [an article](#) a German criminologist and police analyst said that “many countries grapple with far-right infiltration of their security forces”.

*“Police brutality and presence of extremism in law enforcement authorities of EU Member States are very serious phenomena which concern all of us and deserve the EU’s greater attention. If left unaddressed, it can turn into something extremely harmful for our societies. It is also an imperative for the EU not to use a double standard and to take a strong and decisive stand when such incidents happen in the EU. We cannot point to the others and turn a blind eye when it occurs in the EU”, said MEP Peter Pollak, Vice President of Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup.*

The MEPs sent a letter to the President of the European Commission, calling on the Commission to look into how Belgian authorities dealt and are dealing with the investigation of the death of Mr. Chovanec as part of the Commission’s rule-of-law monitoring efforts. They sent a letter to the President of the European Parliament as well, stating that EP cannot tolerate such behavior in a EU Member State while loudly criticizing similar incidents occurring on other continents. A separate letter was also sent to the Chief of Federal Police of Belgium requesting swift and just investigation of the case.

ARDI reminds national authorities of the European Parliament resolution adopted in June this year following the death of George Floyd who also became a victim of police brutality in the United States. The Resolution calls on accountability of European authorities in terms of independent police complaints mechanisms, which “should be established to lead investigations into cases of police misconduct and abuse”. The resolution also underlined that “democratic policing requires that the police be accountable for their actions before the law, the public authorities and the entire public they serve” and that “the key requirement for accountability is the maintenance of effective and efficient oversight instruments”.