

## **ECHR protecting rights across Europe**

AEJ media freedom representative William Horsley noted the importance of the European Court of Human Rights in this message to the British Institute of Human Rights on the anniversary of international human rights convention 3 September 2013:

The 60th anniversary of the Convention should indeed be celebrated by people across Europe and beyond, and it should be an occasion to counter a lot of hostile and ignorant attacks on the Convention itself, as well as the Court of Human Rights and its work. It is a good time to recall that the Court's rulings have helped Britain to improve its patchy human rights record on issues where political or popular opinion had seemed implacably opposed to change, like banning corporal punishment and sweeping stop and search powers for the police.

Recent events in the UK as well as elsewhere have shown again that the Strasbourg court is an absolutely vital safeguard against attempts by the state – including in the UK – to exceed its legitimate powers in matters of justice and security. Journalists should especially be mindful that rulings of the ECHR have strengthened their legal rights to investigate and disclose injustices – from the Sunday Times thalidomide ruling in the 1970s to other landmark cases giving protection to journalists when reporting matters of public interest or resisting the demands of courts to reveal confidential sources. The Convention and the Court are one of the few defences against the worst kinds of injustice and abuse of state power, many of which we are witnessing in the present day, and which today's political leaders are often proving themselves too weak and shallow to take action against.

[EHCR](#)