



**Celebrating Human Rights in Europe
Opening Words – Porto, 17 Nov 2025**

Professor José Lobo Moutinho

Mr. Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights, Professor Arnfinn Bårdsen,

Mr. President of the Portuguese Constitutional Court, Professor José João Abrantes,

Mr. Portuguese Deputy-Ombudsman, Dr. Ravi Afonso Pereira,

Madam Dean of the Oporto School of Law, Professor Marta Portocarrero,

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is with great joy that I declare open this Commemorative Conference which intends to celebrate human rights in Europe.

I am particularly happy to open this academic event, due mostly to three kinds of reasons:

1. The first is that we gather to celebrate the protection of fundamental rights in Europe through two essential European instruments – the European Convention on Human Rights (which was adopted 75 years ago) and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (which completes its 25th anniversary in December).

As Pope Benedict XVI asserted, “human rights became the reference point of a shared universal ethos – at least at the level of aspiration – for most of humankind.” But, as he also pointed out “human rights need to be re-appropriated by every generation and by each individual.”

This need for re-appropriation of human rights arises from the need to keep those rights firmly anchored in their fundamental foundation, that is the dignity and nature of human beings, reacting against the temptation to empty those rights in the face of socio-political conveniences, either real or apparent.

2. Secondly, this necessity is particularly evident in face of the new problems each specific era brings.

And indeed, in this conference, we will have the opportunity to reflect on the most pressing issues regarding human rights in Europe:

- the law of war,
- cultural identity,
- the rule of law,
- judicial dialogue,
- climate change, and
- digital challenges.

3. A third reason to rejoice is that this Conference is a unique opportunity for a broad discussion, (i) bringing together other national and European law schools and (ii) involving European institutions (such as the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the European Union) and national ones (as the Constitutional Court, the Ombudsman’s Office, the National Administration Institute).

Also, as National Dean of the Faculty of Law at the Catholic University of Portugal I could not be more happy to see this Conference bringing together the three schools of our Faculty, with the support of the Research Centre, reflecting and projecting the Faculty of Law as a leading academic institution at the national level – an event we hope will be repeated in the future ideally at least on an annual basis.

I hope – and given the speakers invited to participate, I am certain – that this conference is enriching and inspiring and that it will lead to re-appropriation of

fundamental rights of which Pope Benedict XVI (sixteen) spoke. This – and mostly this – will be its great success.

To open our Conference, it is both an honour and a privilege to welcome the Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights, Professor Arnfinn Bårdsen.

Thank you, Professor Bårdsen, joining us today in this very important occasion for the Faculty of Law at the Catholic University of Portugal that marks the anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Originally from Norway, Professor Bårdsen has had a distinguished academic and judicial career. He previously served as an Associate Professor and Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Bergen, as well as a Visiting Fellow at the European University Institute.

Before joining the European Court, he held judicial positions as a Judge at the Gulating Court of Appeal and as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Norway.

Professor Bårdsen has been a Judge at the European Court of Human Rights since 2019, has served as President of a Section since 2022, and assumed the role of Vice-President of the Court in July 2024.

He will deliver his keynote speech, entitled *“United Around Our Values: Stability Through Democracy, the Rule of Law, and the Protection of Human Rights.”*

Without further ado, please join me in welcoming the Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights, Professor Arnfinn Bårdsen.