

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

Today, I have the privilege to announce the decision of the ECBA regarding this year's Human Rights Award recipient. This award recognizes an individual's dedication and commitment to the advancement of human rights. The award ceremony will take place during our Spring Conference in Brussels, due to some challenges in the candidates' attendance today.

We are proud to bestow the Human Rights Award upon two exceptional individuals whose tireless dedication and remarkable accomplishments have left an indelible mark on the world.

First and foremost, let us honor Ms. Françoise Tulkens, a distinguished Belgian lawyer and a respected expert in criminal law. Her former role as the Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights stands as a testament to her brilliance and unwavering commitment to justice.

Equally deserving of our admiration is Ms. Nancy Hollander, a renowned U.S. criminal defense lawyer, known for her fearless representation of Guantanamo Bay detainees and the prominent whistleblower, Chelsea Manning. Many of us may recognize her incredible work, as she was portrayed by Jodie Foster in the 2021 film "The Mauritanian." The film depicted the harrowing journey of a Guantanamo detainee's unjust incarceration and Nancy's relentless fight to secure his freedom.

Today, as we celebrate the remarkable achievements of Ms. Françoise Tulkens and Ms. Nancy Hollander, we are reminded of the pivotal role that women continue to play in the field of law and the advancement of human rights worldwide.

We must acknowledge the historically marginalized position of women in the legal profession. Throughout history, women have fought against societal norms and barriers to break through the male-dominated legal world. Ms. Françoise Tulkens and Ms. Nancy Hollander stand before us as shining examples of the remarkable achievements that women lawyers can attain. Their trailblazing careers have not only advanced human rights but also shattered glass ceilings, inspiring generations of women lawyers to dream big and aim high. Today, we come together to honor these exceptional women, express our gratitude for their tireless efforts, and draw inspiration from their relentless pursuit of a more just and humane world. Thank you.