



UNDERMINING OF THE RULE OF LAW IN EUROPE

**SYMPOSIUM ABOUT THE WORK
OF PIETER OMTZIGT**

OCTOBER 8, 2025



TIME

ACTIVITY

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| 13:00 – 13:30 | Arrival & guest reception |
| 13:30 – 13:40 | Welcome & introduction by former Minister of Foreign Affairs Caspar Veldkamp . |
| 13:40 – 14:10 | Bill Browder on the Magnitsky Act and the importance of targeted sanctions. |
| 14:10 – 14:40 | Gerald Knaus on corruption in the Council of Europe and how abuses were nevertheless brought to light after the Omtzigt motion, with politicians in Europe being convicted by the courts. |
| 14:40 – 15:10 | Coffee break |
| 15:10 – 15:40 | Vladimir Kara Murza on how Putin has undermined the Russian Rule of Law. |
| 15:40 – 16:25 | Interactive panel discussion with Bill Browder, Gerald Knaus, Vladimir Kara Murza, Pieter Omtzigt and Caspar Veldkamp , led by Danielle Jansen , former Minister of Health, Welfare and Sports. |
| 16:25 – 16:55 | Speech Pieter Omtzigt |
| 16:55 - 17:05 | Speech Eddy van Hijum, leading candidate NSC |
| 17:05 - 17:10 | Speech Reinout van Malenstein, chairman NSC |
| 17:10 - 17:15 | Speech Bishop Polycarpus Augin Aydin |
| 17:15 – 17:30 | Closing |
| 17:30– 18:30 | Networking reception |



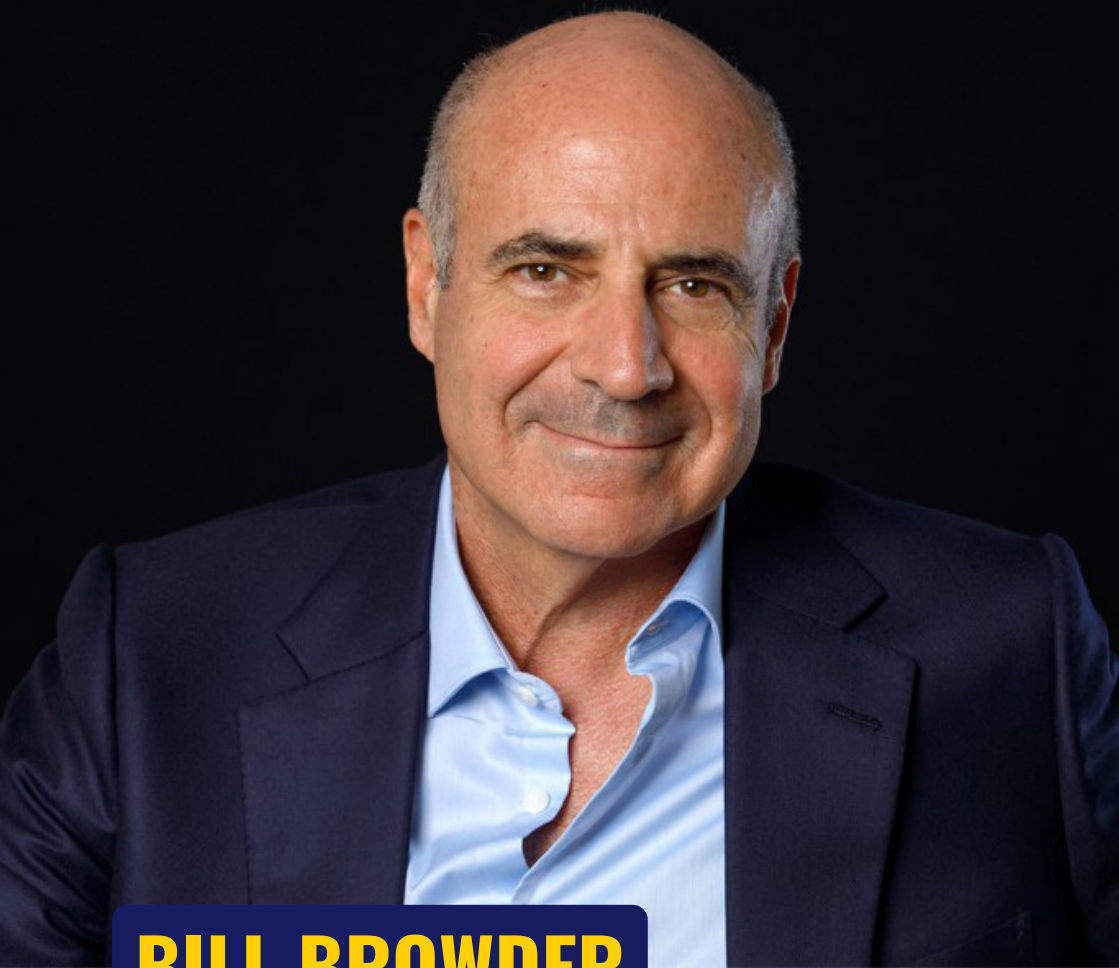
JOIN THE CONVERSATION ON THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY AND THE RULE OF LAW IN EUROPE

How is the Rule of Law faring in Europe? What does the undermining of the Rule of Law elsewhere in Europe mean for our own democracy? What lessons can we learn from the courageous people who have exposed corruption, abuse of power, and organized crime, often at great personal risk?

Gerald Knaus, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Matthew Caruana Galizia and Bill Browder have all worked closely with Pieter Omtzigt in the Council of Europe for many years. They will share their experiences and reflections during this symposium. Special attention will also be given to Pieter's own exceptional contribution.

For 22 years, he worked tirelessly within the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. With an impressive number of reports and unwavering dedication, he made an important contribution to strengthening the Rule of Law in Europe.

Following their speeches, the speakers, together with Pieter Omtzigt and Caspar Veldkamp, will reflect on what is needed to halt the decline of the Rule of Law in Europe.



BILL BROWDER

Bill Browder, the driving force behind the global Magnitsky legislation, will speak about the challenging road to a European Magnitsky Act. In his talk, Browder will reflect on the obstacles he faced, the political resistance in Brussels, and the turning points that ultimately led to success. He will highlight how the actions of one parliamentarian, Pieter Omtzigt, set a process in motion that eventually changed the course of European policy. He will also discuss how the poisoning of Alexey Navalny finally created the political momentum needed for the law to pass. His talk will be an inspiring account of perseverance, political courage, and how individuals can shape history.



MATTHEW CARUANA GALIZIA

Matthew Caruana Galizia will reflect on the process he and Pieter went through at the Council of Europe, how they first met, and the challenges both Pieter and Matthew and his family faced and overcame as they worked together towards a public inquiry in Malta. He will underline how their cooperation demonstrates the vital importance of persistence and solidarity when confronting political resistance. He will stress that in a world of might-is-right, which is the world we live in today, such work and such achievements are increasingly under threat, and in many places, nearly impossible. Politicians who remain silent in the face of efforts to dismantle multilateral institutions, for example, sanctions on the International Criminal Court, have a duty to speak up and take action to defend them. His key message is clear: European democracy must be actively protected, from holding Malta accountable to safeguarding independent institutions and stopping abusive court cases designed to silence journalists and citizens.



GERALD KNAUS

Gerald Knaus, author and founding chairman of the European Stability Initiative (ESI) think tank, will recall how his cooperation with Pieter Omtzigt began when exposing “caviar diplomacy” at the Council of Europe. Together they confronted a network of corruption that undermined the institution’s credibility, with lavish gifts and money from Azerbaijan being used to buy political influence. Their persistence led to an independent investigation that confirmed systemic bribery, forcing the resignation of several senior figures, including Pedro Agramunt, then president of the Council’s Parliamentary Assembly. Knaus will emphasise that the fight demonstrated how determined individuals, working with allies, can protect European institutions from being captured by authoritarian interests. He will warn, however, that the current great challenges to European democracy lie in the erosion of the Rule of Law inside member states, the rise of authoritarian actors at home and abroad seeking to corrupt or paralyse institutions, and the spread of disinformation that weakens trust in democratic debate.



VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA

Vladimir Kara-Murza, a Russian opposition politician, author, historian, and former political prisoner, will look back at Vladimir Putin's 25-year rule over Russia — a rule enabled to a great extent by the acquiescence and outright appeasement of Western democracies. From American presidents who “saw Putin's soul” and pushed “reset buttons” to European leaders who turned a blind eye to Putin's autocratic abuses for the sake of lucrative energy deals, the West often chose realpolitik over principle. Thankfully, throughout these same years, there were also people of principle and conviction in Western politics. Kara-Murza will in particular recall his cooperation with Pieter Omtzigt on enacting Magnitsky sanctions against human rights abusers, as well as on the historic Council of Europe initiative for the formal non-recognition of Putin's continued “presidency” in violation of term-limits after 2024 — an initiative later followed by the European Parliament.

A recording of today's symposium will be made available on the YouTube channels of 'Nieuw Sociaal Contract' and Pieter Omtzigt, both in English and with Dutch subtitles.

The four speakers, Danielle Jansen and Pieter Omtzigt are working on a book on the challenges in human rights. They will not only describe their hard battles but also make proposals for more effective human rights protection mechanisms and for reform of international institutions like the Council of Europe.



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