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**Ensuring the rules  
of professional  
conduct are followed  
by security officials**

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When it comes to the law, we are all equal.

**Défenseur des droits**  
RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

# One institution, five areas of intervention

**“The Defender of Rights ensures that rights  
and freedoms are upheld”**

Article 71-1 of the Constitution

The Defender of Rights is an independent institution tasked with defending rights and individual freedoms within five areas of expertise as determined by the law:



**Defending the  
rights of public  
service users**



**Ensuring the rules  
of professional  
conduct are  
followed by  
security officials**  
(police, gendarmes,  
private security  
services, etc.)



**Defending and  
promoting the  
rights of the child**



**Combating  
discrimination  
and promoting  
equality**



**Guiding and  
protecting  
whistleblowers**

## To accomplish its duties, the Defender of Rights:

- **processes the complaints** it receives by coming up with fitting solutions;
- **works to improve equal access to rights for all** through information and training and by forging partnerships and proposing reforms.



More than **45%**

**of complaint files** received by the institution on the subject of security ethics concern **violence and instances where protocol has not been followed.**

# Ensuring the rules of professional conduct are followed by security officials

The rules of professional conduct governing the work of public and private security officials alike are set forth in various codes and charters. They cover such matters as professional secrecy and discretion, integrity, discernment, impartiality, respect for the population and rules governing the use of force for example.

In France, the Defender of Rights is the authority in charge of ensuring these rules of good practice are followed.

## Which professionals are concerned?

- National and municipal police officers
- Gendarmes
- Prison administration staff
- Customs officers
- Public transport surveillance officers
- Private security service officials

## For what types of professional misconduct?

- Disproportionate use of force
- Offensive behaviour (inappropriate words or gestures, insults, threats, disrespect)
- Abusive body search
- An identity check under abnormal circumstances
- Not enabling a formal complaint to be lodged
- Unfounded restraint measure or deprivation of freedom (arrest, detention, custody, detainment, etc.)

## Under what circumstances can you refer to the Defender of Rights?

- If you consider yourself to have been a **victim** of abusive behaviour on the part of a security professional on French soil (or if you are the victim's beneficiary or heir)
- If you have **witnessed** acts constituting such misconduct



**My requests  
to see a  
doctor  
while I was  
in custody  
went  
unheeded**



**I was  
insulted  
during an  
identity  
check**



**I was prevented from  
filming an arrest**

## **What can the Defender of Rights do?**



**Investigate**



**Come up with  
an amicable  
settlement**



**Make  
recommendations  
about a situation**



**Present its  
observations  
before  
the courts**



**Call for  
disciplinary  
proceedings**



**Put forward  
proposals for  
reforming  
legislation**

# Delegates: a unique service on your doorstep

## The Defender of Rights is shored up by a network of some 500 delegates

There are Defender of Rights delegates available nationwide. Anyone looking for assistance with asserting their rights can contact them free of charge at more than **750 reception points** in mainland France and overseas. These can be found in Maisons de la Justice et du Droit (legal advice centres/MJD), Points d'accès au droit (free drop-in centres for anyone looking for guidance on legal matters/PAD), prefectures or town/city halls for example.

### Delegates can:



**Listen  
to your concerns**



**Guide you  
in your procedures**



**Help you to exercise  
your rights**



**Forward your case  
to the Head Office in Paris**

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**80%**

of complaints lodged with the Defender of Rights are received by the delegates at their local offices



**See the list of offices:**

[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr)

# Think your rights haven't been respected?

Get in touch with the  
Defender of Rights for free



**Via the delegates, at:**

[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr) /

“Comment obtenir des réponses?”

(How can you get answers?)

**or in a reception point.**



**Via freepost, so no need for a stamp:**

Défenseur des droits – Libre réponse 71120 –  
75342 Paris Cedex 07 France



**Via our online form, at:**

[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr) /

“Saisir le Défenseur des droits”

(Refer a case to the Defender of Rights)



You can also get information

**by calling +33 (0)9 69 39 00 00**

or during an appointment with a delegate.



**Don't forget to provide us with all the documents (copies of administrative documents, letters, emails, eye-witness accounts, etc.) that the Defender of Rights will need to examine your case.**

## DID YOU KNOW?

You do not have to pay anything to contact the Defender of Rights.

The Defender of Rights cannot call into question a judicial decision.

Its referral does not interrupt or suspend the statutory timeframes for civil, administrative or criminal proceedings or those concerning administrative appeals or appeals to the court.

**Find out all our news at:**



[www.defenseurdesdroits.fr](http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr)



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