



Joint NGO Letter to the European Parliament on Proposals to Halt Human Rights Activities

Brussels, December 20, 2022

Co-ordinating Members

1. Peace Brigade International
2. Euromed Rights
3. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

Full Members

1. Act Alliance EU
2. Agir Ensemble pour les Droits de l'Homme
3. AidsFonds
4. Amnesty International
5. Association for the Prevention of Torture
6. Brot für die Welt
7. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies
8. Center for Reproductive Rights
9. Christian Solidarity Worldwide
10. Civil Rights Defenders
11. Clean Cloths Campaign (CCC)
12. Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC)
13. Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
14. Conference of European Churches (CEC)
15. DEMAS
16. DOICIP
17. End FGM European Network
18. Ensemble contre la peine de mort
19. EU-Lat Network
20. European Network for Central Africa (EurAc)
21. European Disability Forum
22. European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)
23. European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLo)
24. Fair Trials
25. Front Line Defenders (FLD)
26. Free Press Unlimited
27. Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF)
28. Human Rights Watch (HRW)
29. Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF)
30. ILGA-Europe
31. International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ)
32. International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
33. International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)
34. International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT)
35. International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHr)
36. International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
37. International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)
38. Justice and Peace
39. La Strada International
40. Light for the World
41. Minority Rights Group International
42. Open Society Foundations
43. Oxfam
44. Pax for Peace
45. Peace Brigades International (PBI)
46. Penal Reform International
47. Plan EU Office
48. Protection International
49. Quaker Council for European Affairs
50. Save the Children
51. Search for Common Ground
52. Race & Equality
53. Reporters without Borders
54. Terre des Hommes International Federation
55. Netherlands Helsinki Committee
56. Victims Support Europe
57. World Coalition against the Death Penalty
58. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
59. World Vision International

Dear President Metsola,

Dear Presidents of the political groups of the European Parliament,

We are writing to express our greatest concerns over recent debates and proposals to freeze all activities of the European Parliament's Human Rights Subcommittee (DROI) and to stop all urgency resolutions, in reaction to allegations of corruption known as "Qatargate".

Over the years, the European Parliament has proved to be a strong, critical voice both inside and outside the EU, often filling the silence of other EU institutions. DROI has played a key role in that regard, helping to translate into action the principle that human rights are at the forefront of EU's foreign policy and of the engagement with its partners. DROI hearings have been a precious platform for countless human rights defenders, activists and civil society representatives from around the world to testify, often at great personal risk, on the abuses perpetrated by repressive governments.

Likewise, urgency resolutions have raised the cases of jailed or harassed human rights activists, journalists, lawyers and others, called out human rights violations, repressive legislation and abusive policies by governments and corporations, and encouraged the EEAS, Council, EU delegations and other institutions to make use of the wider EU human rights toolbox – including targeted sanctions, bilateral diplomacy, action at the UN, and trade-related measures – to address those abuses.

Parliament's scrutiny has contributed to the release of human rights defenders and political prisoners, to halting the adoption or triggering the reform of abusive legislation, and ultimately to human rights progress and accountability efforts around the world.

All this is something the European Parliament should feel proud, not ashamed of.

Efforts and investigations to get to the bottom of the allegations and securing justice are in everyone's interest; halting all human rights activities of the European Parliament while sweepingly calling into question the integrity and contribution of all civil society organizations in EU policy-making would be solely in the interest of perpetrators of human rights abuses, to the detriment of their victims.

The legacy of this crisis, and more broadly of this legislature, cannot and should not be the silencing of the European Parliament and the discrediting of all good human rights work Parliament has been carrying out for years. Rather, the institution should recommit to and double down on its efforts to speak up louder and stronger in the face of abuses, including those committed by any government who might have tried to exert undue influence on Parliament activities.

We hope all efforts in the opposite direction will be halted, and we stand ready to discuss these issues with you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

The Human Rights and Democracy Network, HRDN

The Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) is an informal grouping of NGOs operating at EU level in the broader areas of human rights, democracy and conflict prevention. Participation in the network is open to non-governmental organizations which engage at EU level in the promotion of human rights, democracy and conflict prevention in and outside the EU.

The vision of the HRDN is that human rights and democracy are placed at the heart of the EU's internal and external policy agenda. This vision should manifest itself in a EU that effectively protects human rights at home and is a force for positive change in the world. In pursuit of this vision, the network aims to influence EU and member state human rights policies and the programming of their funding instruments to promote democracy, human rights and sustainable peace.