



A Rights-based Approach to Resilience:
HRDN's input to the EEAS and Commission Joint Communication on
Resilience

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- Penal Reform International
- PICUM
- PLAN International
- Protection International
- Quaker Council for European Affairs
- Save the Children
- Search for Common Ground
- Terre des Hommes international federation
- World Coalition against Death Penalty
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
- World Vision

The Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) believes that **the notion of building state and social resilience, referred to in the EU Global Strategy (2016) should be grounded in a human rights based approach.** The idea of resilience (currently defined by the EU as *“the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks”*) should never condone rights violations, even in the most challenging circumstances, or lessen the State's responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all individuals under its jurisdiction.

Empowering individuals through a rights-based approach

HRDN believes that it is vitally important that the EU **understands the “resilience” as contributing to empowerment of individuals as rights-bearers,** including and even more in situations of natural disasters, situations of fragility and conflicts, where their rights have been violated by state and non-state actors.

Empowering communities to bounce back quicker and for all actors to build back better means that people must be able to exercise all their rights; and that the State, as a duty-bearer, is bound by positive obligations to secure the effective enjoyment of these rights.

Furthermore, **under no circumstances should the term “resilience” suggest that people should cope with situations which in fact violate their human rights as enshrined in international law,** such as denial of socio-economic rights; nor should actions to strengthen “resilience” ever result in undermining international human rights standards, or the quest for justice and redress. The EU should be clear that upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms takes primacy.

Strengthening resilience should assist people to realise their rights by providing preventive and supportive measures and options. **HRDN recommends that in the upcoming Communication, the Commission and the EEAS take a rights-based approach to resilience, which is complementary to other EU and global frameworks, notably the wider scope of Agenda 2030, in order to “leave no one behind”.** A rights-based approach to resilience would support citizens realising their civil and political rights and provide equitable access of every person to social, economic and cultural rights. A rights-based approach to resilience would be transformative and empowering, rather than simply palliative, thereby improving people's participation in decision-making, for

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.

example, and working to ensure equality of opportunity and outcome in the future.

Ensuring State responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil rights

HRDN is concerned that the notion of building state and societal resilience should not support governance forms that risk consolidating authoritarian or repressive regimes, in the name of security. Strengthening the state resilience should not take precedence over efforts to support individual and communities to overcome shock or stress. Such implicit contradictions in the Global Strategy's approach to resilience are of considerable concern and should not be reproduced in the upcoming Communication.

The EU can promote societal resilience by calling on states to safeguard the space where citizens can exercise their rights. With the global trends of shrinking civil society space, and attempts to erode the universality and indivisibility of human rights the EU can support resilience of individuals in claiming their rights, whilst holding perpetrators for human rights violations accountable in its diplomacy, and applying human rights conditionality in relations with partner countries.

Supporting accountable governance and civil society as a guarantor of resilience

The EU should pay attention to how state resilience is strengthened. It will be crucial to focus on "tailor-made policies to support inclusive and accountable governance, critical for the protection of human rights" as outlined in the Global Strategy. It is only through transparent and accountable governance, which involves consulting people regularly and involving them in the running of the country's affairs from local to national level and through allowing access to information, a free press and an enabling environment for civil society, that democracy and stability will be achieved. The creation of a strong social contract between a state and the general population, based on people-centered policies, human rights and the rule of law is critical. Furthermore, in order for a society to be resilient, systems should be put in place to resolve disputes peacefully and ensure equitable access to resources- as in a functioning democracy.

HRDN therefore calls on the EU institutions to recognise explicitly that a resilient society is a democratic one in which there is a vibrant civil society which enjoys an enabling environment for its activities and in which all individuals without exception enjoy all their rights and freedoms under a robust rule of law framework.

BACKGROUND

Full resilience definition:

EU Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020 (2013)

“Resilience is the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks. Resilience shall not be understood as an isolated objective but as an integral part of the poverty reduction and lifesaving aims of the EU’s external assistance. The EU’s broad definition of resilience includes the individual level, reflecting our commitment to people-centered approaches and the inclusion of individual (life-cycle) risks, which must be addressed if people are to exit poverty and vulnerability.