



European Parliament: A more Consistent and Coherent Approach on Human Rights and Democracy is Needed

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- Amnesty International
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide
- International Rehabilitation Council for Torture victims

Full Members

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- CBM
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- Conference of European Churches
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- Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
- European Partnership for Democracy
- European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
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- Front Line Defenders
- Human Rights Watch
- Human Rights Without Frontiers
- International Centre for Transitional Justice
- International Dalit Solidarity Network
- International Federation for Human Rights
- International Harm Reduction Association
- International Lesbian and Gay Association - Europe
- International Partnership for Human Rights
- International Rescue Committee Belgium
- Justitia & Pax Netherlands
- La Strada International
- Light for the World
- Minority Rights Group International
- Open Society Institute-Brussels
- Partners for Democratic Change International
- Peace Brigade International
- Penal Reform International
- PLAN International
- Protection International
- Quaker Council for European Affairs
- Reporters sans frontières
- Save the Children
- Search for Common Ground
- Terre des Hommes international federation
- World Coalition against Death Penalty
- World Organisation Against Torture
- World Vision

As the European Parliament (EP) reaches its half term in January 2012 and discussions continue on a new EU human rights strategy, the HRDN believes that now is the time for the EP to reflect on its engagement on human rights and democracy matters and to look at ways in which its role as a global actor on these issues could be enhanced. With this in mind, we call on the EP to strengthen its own **human rights approach** that would enable the Parliament's activities on human rights and democracy to be more visible, coherent and consistent, and thus more influential on the world stage. We believe the following suggestions would help to ensure that human rights and democracy concerns are the foundation on which all EP policies and activities, both internally and externally, are based:

1. The current EP structure does not reflect enough the primacy of human rights and democracy as guiding principles for all EP actions. The EP's Sub-Committee on Human Rights (DROI) should therefore immediately be upgraded to a fully fledged committee with proper competence and sufficient resources.
2. Human rights and democracy are universal issues which deserve equal attention inside EU borders as well as outside them. The EP should make it clear that a coherent and balanced EU approach to human rights and democracy involves equal attention to internal as well as external affairs. DROI should interact regularly both with the Foreign Affairs committee (AFET) as well as the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE).
3. The EP should step up efforts to mainstream human rights effectively into its own structures and processes in order to ensure that human rights and democracy are at the core of all EP actions and policies. It is imperative that human rights concerns be systematically taken into account, debated and reported on by all EP Committees and Delegations within their respective areas of work. In this respect every Committee and Delegation should task a Vice Chair with specific responsibility for human rights and democracy.
4. The EP should strive for improved cooperation on human rights and democracy matters with the EU's 27 national parliaments. For instance regular joint meetings should be organized to discuss urgent matters and real efforts should be made to coordinate national and European-level action on human rights and democracy in order to ensure coherence.
5. The EP should step up contact with independent civil society and human rights defenders, particularly through its Delegations and in all third country visits. In this light EP delegations should commit to a policy of always meeting with human rights defenders and independent civil society when traveling abroad. Contact and cooperation with parliamentarians in third countries should also be increased.

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.

6. EP Delegations travelling abroad should systematically raise human rights concerns and recommendations included in relevant EP resolutions and reports.
7. The EP needs to be more coherent and systematic when following-up on its own resolutions and reports dealing with human rights and democracy matters. A mechanism for follow up should be included in future EP resolutions and reports that would include specific language that clearly indicates who is in charge of follow up and the timeframe envisaged.
8. The EP should improve alignment between EP activities and the EU's broader policy agenda (e.g. review of third country sanctions, EU-third country Summits and other high level meetings), and work with other EU institutions to ensure a coherent and unified stance regarding any violations of human rights.
9. The EP should be a leading force in demanding more transparency and accountability from all EU institutions on how human rights commitments are being implemented. For instance the EP should insist on access to the EU's new third country human rights strategies that are currently being developed. The EP should also monitor more closely the implementation of EU human rights guidelines on the ground.
10. As the EU's only directly elected institution the EP should itself be committed to the highest standards of transparency and accountability and serve as a model for all other EU institutions. In this respect:
 - Positions, such as the EP President, Vice President and Chairs/Vice Chairs of Committees and Delegations with a responsibility for human rights should be appointed in a transparent manner.
 - Parliamentary Committee and Delegation meetings with EU officials, particularly with newly appointed Heads of EU delegations, high level EEAS officials and EU Special Representatives should be held in public, at least in part, so that European citizens have the opportunity to hear what their representatives on both sides have to say. It is crucial that, while acting on behalf of European institutions and hence, on behalf of European citizens, the EP subjects these EU officials to public scrutiny to ensure they remain accountable throughout their mandate.
 - The EP should ensure that the process of choosing urgency resolutions topics, and the criteria involved in that process, is transparent and that civil society are adequately involved and consulted in a timely manner.
 - In the process of re-identifying security criteria and rules the EP should not hamper the access of civil society representatives and not-for profit interest groups to the EP buildings, as it is vital for informed policy-making and democracy, in Europe and beyond, to consult and engage with such stakeholders.