

Strengthening Regional Human Rights Defenders' Networks in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Turkey

**European Parliament premises, Brussels, Belgium
20-21 March 2017**

Objectives of the meeting

The event *Strengthening Regional Human Rights Defenders Networks in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Turkey* aims to:

- Present to HRDs the international and regional mechanisms and tools they have available in relation to their protection (including those provided by the EU and the OSCE);
- Provide greater opportunities for networking and exchanging experiences on effective ways to address challenges faced by HRDs, locally and internationally;
- Improve HRDs interaction with European institutions' and European Parliament's activities in support of human rights;
- Enable concerted advocacy efforts by HRDs to regional and international institutions, and two-way political dialogue between those institutions and HRDs; Strengthen visibility and voice of human rights defenders.

Draft Agenda

Day 1- March 20, 2017

09:00 **Registration and accreditation of participants at the EU Parliament premises**
Venue: "Event Participants and Guests", left side of the ASP Simone Veil entrance
Venue for the morning session: ASP 1G2

10:00-10:30 **Opening remarks**

- Mr. Omer Fisher, Acting Head of Human Rights Department OSCE/ODIHR,
- Mr. Nacho Sánchez Amor, Chair of Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, OSCE PA [TBC]
- Mr. Pietro Ducci, Director, Democracy Support, Directorate-General External Policies [TBC]

10:30-12:00 **Panel Discussion: International and regional mechanisms for the protection of HRDs**

Moderator: *Gerald Staberock, OMCT Secretary General*

Presenters: [TBC]

- European Commission (Director/Head of Division/EEAS/ DEVCO)
- David Mark, Human Rights Adviser, OSCE/ODIHR
- Mr. Furkat Tishaev, Advisers to the Commissioner, Council of Europe Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights

- UN OHCHR or the Special Rapporteur on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Representatives of the mentioned institutions will briefly present the various mechanisms and tools they have available in relation to the protection of human rights defenders. The ongoing and potential co-ordination between these mechanisms will be also presented and discussed. Debate with Q+A from HRDs will provide an opportunity for the defenders to comment on the applicability and usability of those mechanisms and tools, thus offering a “reality check” and recommendations for improvements.

**12:00-12:45 How the European Parliament Fights for Human Rights
Presentation by experts from the secretariat and the political groups**

12:45-13:30 Lunch Break (sandwiches)
Venue: meeting room ASP 1G2

From 13.30 to 15:45 participants will work in parallel working groups:

13:30-14:45 Session 1: Risks & challenges that human rights defenders face in their work

The objective of the session is to name the most common risks and challenges human rights defenders are exposed to in their work. Participants will engage in in-depth discussion in thematic working groups. Each working groups will have a presenter, moderator and rapporteur selected among the HRDs.

1. Working in active and protracted conflict situations, and how this affects HRDs
2. How the State portrays HRDs in law and practice, and what it means for HRDs' work and protection
3. Impact of the rise of radical violent extremism on the work HRDs
4. HRDs supporting migrants
5. Dialogue, citizen engagement and building trust between HRDs and the public
6. The relationship between HRDs and law enforcement, the right to fair trial and effective remedies

14:45-15:45 Session 2: Overcoming risks & challenges to the protection of HRDs and promotion of their rights

Participants will engage in in-depth discussion, in the six thematic working groups, about good practices in the protection of HRDs and promotion of their rights and practical solutions (examples of effective approaches by the defenders and by other State and non-State, national, regional and international actors) to overcome the risks and challenges the defenders face. Each working groups will have a presenter, moderator and rapporteur selected among the HRDs.

1. Working in active and protracted conflict situations
2. How the State portrays HRDs in law and practice
3. Impact of the rise of radical violent extremism on the work HRDs
4. HRDs supporting migrants
5. Dialogue, citizen engagement and building trust between HRDs and the public
6. The relationship between HRDs and law enforcement, the right to fair trial and effective remedies

15:45 Break

16:15 – 17:15 Session 3: Reporting to the plenary

During this session, rapporteurs from each working group will present, at the plenary, the results of the previous sessions, and participants will discuss them (open, moderated discussion) vis -a- vis the effectiveness of international and regional mechanisms, with a view to agree on their inclusion in the final event's document.

Moderator: David Mark, Human Rights Adviser, OSCE/ODIHR

17:20- 18:30 EU engagement for human right defenders - keynote addresses

Remarks by EC, EP, OSCE Chair, ODIHR, CoE and UN.
Representatives of the mentioned institutions will issue political statements regarding the situation of human rights of defenders and demonstrate strong political support to the protection of human rights defenders.

Speakers: [TBC]

High-level representatives of European Parliament

Ms. Mogherini

Commissioner Hahn,

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office

Stavros Lambrinidis – EUSR on Human Rights

a representative of Memorial

Director, OSCE/ODIHR

OSCE PA

18:45-19:45 Reception

Day 2- March 21, 2017

08:15 Registration of participants

Venue: "Event Participants and Guests", left side of the ASP Simone Veil entrance

Venue for the morning session: ASP 1G2

09:00-10:00 Session 5: Security of human rights defenders: physical safety, digital security and psychosocial well-being.

The focus of this session will be on the key issues of physical safety and psychosocial well-being of human rights defenders.

Moderator: Stephanie Selg, Advisor on Torture Prevention, OSCE/ODIHR

Panellists:

- ILGA-EUROPE;
- International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims
- Front Line Defenders
- ProtectDefenders.eu

- Protection International

10:00-11:00 Session 5: Security of defenders: physical safety, digital security and psychosocial well-being (continued).

In this session, the defenders will discuss how to integrate security more comprehensively into their work and how to address their protection needs more systematically. The focus of this session will be on the key issues of digital security.

Moderator: Brian Griffey, Human Rights Adviser, OSCE/ODIHR

Panellists:

- ILGA-EUROPE;
- International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims
- Front Line Defenders
- ProtectDefenders.eu
- Protection International

11:00 Break

11:30- 13:00 Session 6: Recommendations and advocacy messages on the protection of and support for human rights defenders

Based on key challenges and good practice examples/possible responses to overcome them, as well as the security aspects of the HRDs' work identified during previous days, at this session the participants will discuss and agree on specific recommendations for actions that the EU, the OSCE, the CoE and OSCE participating States should take to strengthen the protection of human rights defenders and ensure the environment conducive to their work.

Moderator: A prominent Human Rights Defender [TBC]

13:00-13:45 Lunch Break (sandwiches, provided by EP)

14:00-15:30 Session 6: Recommendations and advocacy messages on the protection of and support for human rights defenders (continued)

Key recommendations and advocacy message by HRDs will be finalized in a discussion in a plenary setting and prepared for communication to representatives of the EU institutions, international organizations and Delegations of the OSCE participating States as applicable.

Moderator: A prominent Human Rights Defender [TBC]

16:00 Guided tour to the Parliamentarium, the European Parliament Visitors' Centre¹, organised by the EP, for all the participants.

¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/brussels/parlamentarium>