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The delegation was impressed by the remarkable changes that have taken place in the country during the last two years and called on the EU to support the ambitious reform agenda. Despite the positive developments there are many remaining challenges that need to be addressed, such as continuing human rights violations, including discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, the importance of constitutional reform to improve democratic institutions, and economic development for the benefit of all.

DROI delegation to Burma / Myanmar - 3-5 April 2013



The schedule for the delegation visit of DROI members - Barbara Lochbihler (Chair of the delegation), Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Inese Vaidere and Elisabeth Jeggle, was very intense, permitting the delegation to better understand the important political reforms taking place in the country.

The visit included meetings with Government representatives, Parliament, political parties, journalists, civil society organisations and UN organisations sur place. On Thursday, 4 April, the delegation also met with Sakharov prize laureate, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Update on DOHA climate change conference, 11 April 2013

Members held a discussion with Matthias Groote, Chair of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety for an update on the DOHA Climate Change Conference. The speakers agreed that while DOHA achieved more than expected, it achieved less than was hoped for. In fact little progress was made ahead of the next key conference due to be held in 2013.

The main challenges addressed were the need to find donor sources of financing for the least developed countries to help them with adaptation measures and to overcome the emissions gap. The need to look at the growing problem of climate refugees and to create a legal definition of climate refugees was also discussed. Experts also called for the creation of an office of a UN Special

Rapporteur on Climate Change within the UN Human Rights Council.

DROI Delegation to the Human Rights Council in Geneva, and an exchange of views with Bert Theuermann, Chair of COHOM, 11 April 2013

Barbara Lochbihler, Chair of DROI, briefed members on the participation of the DROI delegation, composed of herself, Jacek Protasiewicz and Véronique De Keyser, in the spring session of the Human Rights Council.

Bert Theuermann, Chair of the Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), the Council Working Group on Human Rights was invited to DROI to give the EU's assessment of the outcome of the session, including to what extent the EU's priorities were met and what the next steps should be. Mr Theuermann concluded that it had been "a successful but not an easy session" as the key themes were subject to differing national and regional approaches and positions.

He pointed out the need for the EU to link its work in Geneva vis-à-vis third countries and reiterated the appreciation of the regular DROI presence in Geneva and the fact that the DROI delegation had intensified its inter-action with non-EU (HRC) member states.

MEPs indicated that it would make sense for DROI to participate in other HRC sessions during the year in order to ensure more consistency, follow-up and synergy with Parliament's own work.

For the next session the key EU priorities will include: Belarus, South Sudan, Eritrea, LGBTI and violence against women.

**Ladies In White, 2005 Sakharov Laureates
24 April 2013**



On the 24 April 2013 the Cuban protest group Ladies in White came to the European Parliament to collect their award - Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, which they were given in 2005. In previous years the Cuban authorities had refused to let these mothers and wives of political prisoners travel to Europe. Berta Soler, speaking on behalf of the group, answered questions from the press and those received from EP's Facebook fans. She thanked the European Parliament and the President, Martin Schulz, for the prize and said that it is "a shield protecting our peaceful fight".

The main message that the Ladies in White brought to Parliament was that they are going to

continue their peaceful fight for the freedom of political prisoners with the purpose of denouncing the Cuban regime and unveiling the truth.

Further information:

[Watch it live](#)

[Interview with the Ladies in White](#)

[Press Conference](#)

[Press release](#)

Saudi Arabian Minister for Justice Mohammed bin Abdulkareem al-Issa 23 April 2013

DROI Chair, Barbara Lochbihler, met bilaterally with the Saudi Arabian Minister of Justice on 23 April (after his meeting with the Committee on Foreign Affairs the previous day). The discussion addressed, among other issues, the Saudi judicial system, including its use of the death penalty and corporal punishment, the role of civil society in Saudi Arabia, the current situation regarding freedom of expression, and the rights of women. The Minister also met with President Schulz.



infringement of their economic and social rights, such as loss of cultural heritage and traditional livelihood, lack of compensation, displacement and weak or non-existent legislative and consultative frameworks to protect these communities.

Strong support emerged in the hearing for DROI to commission a study on indigenous people and the extractive industries, which should feed into the work of the Interparliamentary Union (IPU). (The IPU is currently working on a handbook for parliamentarians on indigenous issues with a view to the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous People.)

Hearing on the human rights implications of the use of drones, 25 April 2013

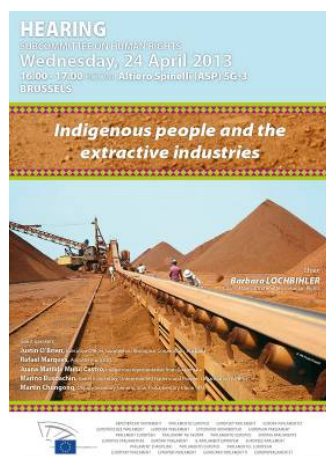
Jointly with the Subcommittee on Security and Defense

The hearing was well attended and MEPs appreciated the input from the invited speakers, including the author of the study, Dr. Nils Melzer, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Ben Emmerson, UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, Camille Grand, Director, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, Paris, and Hilary Brooke Stauffer, Deputy Director, Reprieve, UK. In addition, a video message was played from Mary Ellen O'Connell, Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame, USA.

MEPs debated with the participants on the double use of drones (for civil and military purposes), the legal and ethical framework regulating these uses, and emphasized the role that the EU and national governments should play in creating and monitoring this framework.

"Human Rights are not suspended during war scenarios", said Barbara Lochbihler, Chair of the DROI Subcommittee. "The study presented at the public hearing today analytically shows the

Hearing on Indigenous people and the extractive industries, 24 April 2013



Participants from Australia, Angola, and Guatemala gave a vivid account of the numerous challenges faced by indigenous communities as a result of the activities of the extractive industries, mostly the

legal difficulties and grey zones of the use of drones, especially by the US", she added.

Given the importance of contributing to the overall on-going debate on the use of drones at international level, one of the main conclusions of the hearing was that the EU should:

- in the short term actively promote transparency, accountability and the rule of law in relation to the use of drones, and
- initiate a broader dialogue on a possible future legally binding/ non-binding framework governing their use.

Two political groups (S&D and Greens) underlined the need to adopt an EP resolution on this topic in order to push forward the debate at European level.



[Press release](#)

FRONTEX

16 May 2013



One year on from the adoption of the amended regulation on FRONTEX, the Subcommittee hosted an exchange of views focussing on the new responsibilities of the Agency to protect human rights. The recently appointed Fundamental Rights Officer (FRO) of Frontex, Ms Immaculada Arnaez, presented the new mechanisms for the oversight of Frontex's fulfilment of its human rights obligations to DROI members. The FRO also outlined the current and forthcoming measures designed to ensure such obligations are implemented (notably human rights training, and the creation of procedures to mainstream human rights in all activities.

The need for an active EP role in the oversight of Frontex activities was also stressed by one of the panel speakers, Ms Dumery, who presented the resolution on Frontex recently adopted by the Council of Europe.

Revised EU guidelines on the death penalty **16 May 2013**

DROI hosted an exchange of views on the recently adopted new EU guidelines on the death penalty. The purpose of this exchange was also to have a broad discussion on executions and death sentences in view of the 5th World Congress against the death penalty which was due to be held in Madrid from 12 to 15 June.



The EEAS presented the new guidelines as the product of a close consultation with Member States and NGOs. They also emphasized their success in lobbying for the

UN resolution which resulted in an increasing number of States voting in favour of a moratorium on executions.

This exchange of views was attended by a delegation of 15 parliamentarians from Central Asia, East Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East and North Africa, committed to the fight against the death penalty.

Exchange of views with EU Ambassador to Yemen, Bettina Muscheidt, on the situation in Yemen, 28 May



Members welcomed the EU Ambassador to Yemen, Bettina Muscheidt, to an exchange of views on the human rights situation and the prospects for the national dialogue in Yemen. This discussion followed on from a DROI delegation visit to Sana'a a year ago, in May 2012. Ambassador Muscheidt presented a comprehensive overview of the situation in Yemen, and spoke on the EU's efforts ranging from humanitarian aid to support for the still fragile national dialogue process. She strongly encouraged the European Parliament to stay focused on Yemen, recommending a new DROI delegation visit and an EP election observation delegation to oversee planned elections in February 2014.

Members put forward questions on topics such as the juvenile death penalty, child marriage,

transitional justice, as well as the EU's role in international efforts to support the inclusiveness of the national dialogue process.

Exchange of views on the human rights situation in Russia, 28 May 2013



DROI had an exchange of views on the human rights situation in Russia, with particular focus on political prisoners and civil society organisations. The event was organised at a time when EU-Russia relations are far from being satisfactory, particularly regarding human rights and democracy. The discussion was devoted to the fate of political prisoners and to the increasingly reduced space for civil society organisations. Highly knowledgeable guest speakers - Karinna Moskalenko, a lawyer from the International Protection Centre and William Browder, from Hermitage Capital Management, spoke with passion on the situation of Khodorkovsky and the late Sergei Magnitsky.



The highlight of the meeting was the presence of two masked members of the Pussy Riot band who explained the case underway against the group.

[Press release](#)

Exchange of views with President Schulz, 19 June 2013



During the exchange of views, President Schulz noted the importance of human rights in the work of the European Parliament, invoking his own personal engagement during his earlier career, including in the EP as a member and coordinator for his political group in the Subcommittee on Human Rights. He argued for the raising of the profile of the Subcommittee and even shared his own personal views in favour of upgrading the Subcommittee to full committee status. He emphasised the importance of using the full potential of the EP and the Subcommittee, as well as the interdisciplinary nature of human rights issues, and provided examples of how the EP can make a difference (citing the current example of the Cox-Kwasniewski mission to Ukraine, and the Tymoshenko case).

In the ensuing debate the President answered questions on the consistency of EU policy, mainstreaming of human rights, trade agreements and the human rights clause, the role of the urgency resolutions and their possible improvement, the EU Special Representative for human rights, frozen conflicts, LGBTI rights, Russia (the situation of NGOs, including Sakharov laureate Memorial and the "foreign agents" law), Ethiopia, and the Western Balkans.

Robert King, 19 June 2013



This exchange of views took place one month before the planned visit to the DPRK of the European Parliament's Delegation for the Relations with the Korean Peninsula. Ambassador King informed DROI about recent developments regarding human rights issues in North Korea. The recent period of provocation has been replaced by a period of relatively greater engagement with the international community. The US, together with the EU, supported the creation of the UN Commission of Inquiry and are looking forward to the recommendations of the Commission (the preliminary report is expected in autumn).

In the meantime, the North Korean leadership must continue to be held accountable for its actions and human rights violations. Another important issue for the US is to break down the information barrier faced by the population in North Korea. With regard to this, there are some positive developments to report (20-30% of recent refugees from the North report that they had the possibility of listening to foreign radio stations, and had access to DVDs from South Korea. In addition, it is estimated that there are approximately two million mobile phones among the DPRK population.)

It is in the interest of the US to improve relations with the DPRK, especially if there are positive developments in the country, the pre-requisite being North Korea's giving up of its nuclear programme.

Exchange of views with Ambassador

The EEAS informed Members that the EU continues to provide assistance (food aid) to the most vulnerable groups and highlighted the cases of refugees being returned from other countries to the DPRK, where, on their return, they are at serious risk. The latest such case was the return of DPRK refugees from Laos at the beginning of June.

Exchange of views on media freedom in the Western Balkans, 19 June 2013

The Subcommittee held an exchange of views on the legislative aspects of media freedom in the Western Balkans and Turkey, as a contribution to the Speak up!2 conference, which was due to take place the next day at the European Commission (DG Enlargement). Speakers from the Council of Europe, parliaments of the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey, and NGOs took part in the exchange of views.

Particular focus was placed on the situation in Turkey, with a statement from a Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

Speakers debated the need to firmly deplore all attacks on journalists and to investigate and prosecute all such cases, the role of public service broadcasters, the existence of political pressures on the media, the importance of a transparent allocation of public funds to the media, and the problem of self-censorship of journalists influenced by the precarious financial situation of some of the media in the region. Attention was also paid to the need for coherence between internal and external EU policies in the area of media freedom.

Exchange of views on minorities in Israel, 20 June 2013

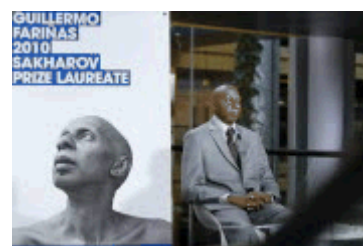
The discussion on the human rights of the Bedouin and other minorities took place in association with the Delegation for relations with the Palestine Legislative Council (the Delegation for Relations with Israel had been invited but were unable to

attend) and focused almost entirely on the situation of the Bedouins and the likely consequences of the current legislative proposal (the so called "Begin Plan") now underway in the Knesset.

The discussion also followed up on Parliament's July 2012 resolution calling for "the protection of the Bedouin communities of the West Bank and in the Negev, and for their rights to be fully respected by the Israeli authorities."

The views expressed by the two attorneys representing Israeli human rights NGOs reflected the concern over the sustainability of Bedouin culture and their way of life. This concern was shared by most of the MEPs present, many of whom called for a more assertive EU approach. The response of the EEAS, however, was quite circumscribed and cautious, albeit stressing that the issue had been raised in contacts with the Israeli Government.

Guillermo Fariñas, winner of the Sakharov Prize 2010, 3 July 2013



The Cuban dissident Guillermo Fariñas finally received his Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, awarded by the European Parliament, in Strasbourg on Wednesday, 3 July, almost three years after Havana lifted the travel ban that prevented him from collecting it in 2010.



[Press release](#)

Presentation of a study on "Child witchcraft allegations and human rights", 10 July 2013

The authors of the study presented the draft to the Subcommittee.



Although clear statistics are not available, child witchcraft allegations are reported mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa and are considered a new phenomenon, not a traditional practice. Experts from UNICEF's Brussels Office, the European Commission, DG DEVCO and the EEAS complemented the discussion. Investment in education, adoption of legislation banning the practice, systematic registration of all children born, and proper justice for all victims are measures which could help to reduce the number of cases of children suffering mistreatment and torture due to these allegations. Implementation of the EU Guidelines on the rights of the child, projects organised in the framework of development cooperation and under the EIDHR and preparation of a Toolkit on the rights of the child for development cooperation are some of the activities carried out by the EU institutions in order to address

the issue, which is sometimes part of a bigger problem of violence against children.

Presentation of a study on "Addressing contemporary forms of slavery in EU external policy", followed by an exchange of views with Myria Vassiliadou, EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, 10 July 2013

Top 10 Facts About Modern Slavery

- Slavery: forced to work without pay under threat of violence and unable to walk away.
- 27 million slaves in the world today.
- Slavery is not legal anywhere but happens everywhere.
- The majority of slaves can be found in India and in African countries.
- At least 14,500 slaves are trafficked into the US each year.
- Slaves work in fields, brothels, homes, mines, restaurants -- anywhere slave owners can feed their greed.
- Human trafficking is the modern-day slave trade.
- \$90 is the average cost of a human slave around the world.
- Slave owners use many terms to avoid the word slavery: debt bondage, bonded labor, attached labor, restavec, forced labor, indentured servitude, and human trafficking.
- It is possible to end slavery in 25 years. Everyone has a role to play - government, business, international organizations, consumers, YOU.

www.freetheslaves.net

Professor Kevin Bales from the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation, University of Hull, outlined his study, the main focus of which is on slavery within EU Member States. Parliament was presented with a wide range of recommendations for the EU to consider if it is to combat contemporary forms of slavery.

Taking the floor to comment on the study, Mrs Myria Vassiliadou, the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, clarified the EU legal framework on slavery, forced labour, and human trafficking, making reference to a number of important documents including the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive. Ms Vassiliadou also mentioned concrete efforts to tackle human trafficking, internally as well as externally, at the level of the EU as well as of Member States. However when commenting on the study, Mrs Vassiliadou questioned its methodology, terminology, data-gathering, and scope, and called for further clarifications.

The authors of the study were asked to take note of the recommendations expressed in the exchange of views in order to further improve the quality of the study.

Exchange of views on the recent human rights violations in Turkey, 11 July 2013

The exchange of views with speakers in Turkey was held through a video link and focused on the situation in Turkey following the recent demonstrations and weeks of unrest across the country. Dr. Selcuk Atalay, Secretary General, Medical Association and Emrah Şeyhanlioğlu, representing the Human Rights Association (HRA) and the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (HRFT) gave an account of the events and responses of the authorities.

The ensuing discussion focused on the continued use of excessive force by the police, the cases and harassment against lawyers, medical staff and other professionals, and the need for accountability at all levels for human rights abuses.

The issue of the polarisation of Turkish society and the impact of the on-going protests on Turkey's general political culture was also addressed. MEPs praised the work of doctors and human rights defenders who had made an outstanding contribution in difficult circumstances, and expressed their support for those fighting for democracy, European values and the basic principle of having a chance to influence decisions affecting the lives of citizens.



Current draft reports



Corruption in the public and private sectors: the impact on human rights in third countries 2013/2074 (INI)
Rapporteur: Ana Gomes (S&D)
Deadline for amendments: 30 May, 12 noon
Vote in AFET: 27 June

Vote in Plenary: October (A7-0250/2013)



The situation of human rights in the Sahel Region 2013/2020 (INI)
Rapporteur: Charles Tannock (ECR)
Deadline for amendments: 1 July, 18h00
Vote in AFET: 17 September
Vote in Plenary: October



Annual report on human rights in the World 2012 and the EU's policy on the matter 2013/2152(INI)
Rapporteur: Eduard Kukan (EPP)
Deadline for amendments: 1 October, 12 noon

Vote in AFET: 14 November
Vote in plenary: tbc



Eradication of torture in the world
Rapporteur: Véronique De Keyser (S&D)
Deadline for amendments: tbc
Vote in AFET: tbc
Vote in plenary: tbc

Current draft opinions

Mid-term review of the Stockholm Programme 2013/2024 (INI) CJ08/7/12106
Rapporteur: Jean-Jacob Bicep (GREENS/EFA)

Deadline for amendments: 16 July, 12 noon
Vote in AFET: 24 September
Vote in LIBE: October
Vote in Plenary: tbc



Disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by certain large companies and groups 2013/0110(COD)
Rapporteur: Thijs Berman (S&D)
Deadline for amendments: 4 October 2013, 12 noon

Vote in AFET: 26 November
Vote in JURI:
Vote in plenary: tbc

Human Rights-related resolutions/texts adopted in plenary 2013

July 2013 - Strasbourg

Resolutions: Situation in Djibouti, Situation in Egypt, Situation in Nigeria

June 2013 - Strasbourg

Resolutions: 2013 review of the organisation and functioning of the EEAS, Recommendation to the Council on the 68th session of the UN General Assembly, Azerbaijan: Case of Ilgar Mammadov, Reconstruction and democratisation of Mali, Situation of Rohingya Muslims, Rule of law in Russia, Situation in Turkey



EP recommendation to the Council on the draft EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief 2013/2082 (INI)
Rapporteur: Laima Liucija Andrikiene (EPP)
Deadline for amendments: 8 May, 12 noon.
Vote in AFET: 30 May

Vote in Plenary: June

[Text](#)



The freedom of press and media in the world 2011/2081 (INI)
Rapporteur: Marietje Schaake (ALDE)
Vote in AFET: 7 May
Vote in Plenary: June

[Text](#)

May 2013 - Strasbourg

Resolutions: Guantánamo: hunger strike by prisoners, India: execution of Mohammad Afzal Guru and its implications, Rwanda: the case of Victoire Ingabire, Situation of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries

April 2013 - Strasbourg

Resolutions: Human rights situation in Kazakhstan; Vietnam, in particular freedom of expression



The impact of the financial and economic crisis (2012/2136(INI))
Rapporteur: Inese Vaidere (EPP)
The report (A7-0057/2013) was adopted in plenary on 18 April.

[Text](#) [Press release](#)

Link to all [resolutions](#)

Next DROI Meetings 2013

Wednesday, 18 September, pm
Wednesday, 25 September, am+pm
(with National Parliaments)
Thursday, 26 September, am
Monday, 14 October, pm
Monday, 11 November, pm
Wednesday, 27 November, am+pm
Thursday, 28 November, am

[DROI Calendar 2013](#)

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