



March - April 2016

DROI Meeting 3 March

Exchange of views with Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman



Emily O'Reilly, the European Ombudsman, spoke about her Decision on a complaint concerning the failure of the European Commission to conduct a prior human rights impact assessment (IA) on the EU-Vietnam free trade agreement. The complaint had been lodged by the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR) and the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), the latter of which was represented by Gaëlle Dusepulchre at the DROI event.

DROI Members engaged in a lively and interesting debate with the Ombudsman and the representative of FIDH. Mauro Petriccione, the Deputy Director-General of DG TRADE, defended the fact that the Commission had decided not to carry out an IA and rather take an "integral focus" on the human rights impact of the trade agreement. In the ensuing discussion, members of DROI strongly criticised the Commission's approach, particularly the lack of an adequate response once the provisional decision had been issued by the Ombudsman in March 2015, recommending that an IA should be carried out without delay. The discussion also focused on the role of the DROI Subcommittee and Parliament in general concerning agreements with third countries.

[Press release](#)

Exchange of views with members of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts regarding the disappearance of the 43 teaching students in Ayotzinapa

In light of the disappearance of 43 Mexican students on 26 September 2014, DROI held a discussion with members of the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI), which was established following an agreement between the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH), the Mexican government and representatives of the victims. The two experts, Claudia Paz y Paz and Carlos Beristain, gave an account of the on-going investigation into the disappearances, including the difficulty in gaining access to existing evidence and information, as critical information and evidence seems to have been lost or is not accessible. The experts also welcomed the readiness of the Mexican government to create a technical mechanism as well as the support it has offered to the GIEI.

[Press release](#)

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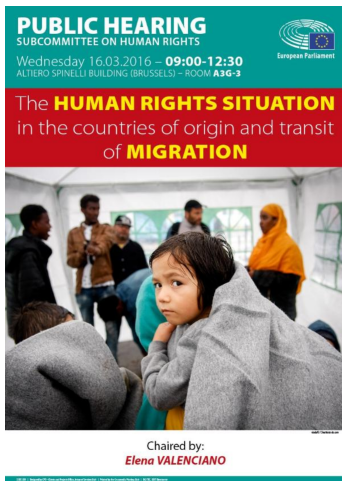
Work In Progress

Urgency resolutions

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DROI Meeting 16 March

Hearing on the human rights situation in the countries of origin and transit of migration



This hearing took up the entire morning session of the Subcommittee in order to accommodate a thorough analysis of the topic and sufficient time for debate with Members. The hearing kicked off with the presentation of a DROI study entitled "Migrants in the Mediterranean: Protecting Human Rights", which was followed by three panel discussions covering the main causes of migration, the issue of migration routes

riddled with human rights violations and a human rights-based approach to migration-related policies.

The invited experts came from international institutions such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as civil society organisations such as Médecins sans frontières (MSF), Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), Proactiva Open Arms and the Euro-Med Rights group. Mr Christian Leffler, Deputy Secretary General for Economic and Global Issues (EEAS) and Mr François Bienfait, European Asylum Support Office (EASO) participated in the hearing. All the experts insisted on the necessity of putting in place a comprehensive, holistic and human rights-based policy to address the migration crisis. They called on the EU to offer safe and legal passage to migrants so as to combat smugglers and international traffickers. Mr Leffler gave a brief account of the EU Agenda on Migration adopted in May 2015 and the EU's External Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy (July 2015). Mr Bienfait spoke on the activities of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

Human rights situation in Crimea

In association with the Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee

This exchange of views was organised and chaired jointly with the EP Delegation to the Ukraine PAC in follow-up to Parliament's resolution of February 2016 on Crimea and previous hearings on human rights in Crimea and Ukraine. The speakers focused on the on-going court cases of Crimean Tatars, media representatives and human rights activists, as well as freedom of expression and the situation of Crimean Tatar and other independent media in Crimea, providing further insight into the state of play on the second anniversary of the illegal annexation of Crimea.

Members called for follow-up to the on-going individual trials of political prisoners and the recently launched court case against the Crimean Tatar Mejlis (the highest level official Crimean representative assembly/council), which is accused of being an "extremist organisation".

The Head of Office of the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) also intervened, followed by comments from the EEAS.

Exchange of views with Golog Jigme, Tibetan human rights activist

A very special guest joined the DROI meeting on 16 March: the Tibetan Golog Jigme (also known as Jigme Gyatso). He is one of the most high-profile former Tibetan political prisoners and a survivor of torture who recently escaped from Tibet. Members of DROI had the opportunity to hear his personal story and learn about his advocacy work for freedom of expression and religion in Tibet.



The human rights situation in Tibet indeed remains a long-standing priority of the European Parliament. The exchange views with the speaker focussed on the current situation in Tibet, as well as on UN procedures and special mechanisms to hold China to account for human rights violations.

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Exchange of views with the offices of the Ombudsmen from Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans Countries



As part of the 3rd Ombudsmen Summit in the European Parliament, the DROI Subcommittee held an exchange of views with the offices of the Ombudsmen from 6 countries from the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia and Kosovo). The exchange of views was complemented by input from the Polish Ombudsman, Adam Bodnar, and the Secretary General of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENHRI), Debbie Kohner. The exchanges with the Ombudsmen centred around current challenges in protecting human rights with a focus on migration and IDPs, as well as best practices, needs and challenges concerning EU support for NHRIs. Both the EEAS and the Commission (DG NEAR) provided well-received input.

DROI Meeting of 20 April

Exchange of views with Taslima Nasreen, Sakharov Laureate



DROI Members had the opportunity for an exchange of views with Taslima Nasreen, Sakharov Laureate from 1994. Ms Nasreen is a Bangladeshi blogger and activist who has lived in exile since 1994. In the exchange of views, Ms Nasreen discussed the worsening situation for Bangladeshi dissidents, writers and bloggers. The exchange of views was originally planned together with Mr Salih Mahmoud Osman, Sakharov Laureate for 2007. He was unfortunately not able to travel due to passport and visa difficulties, but he delivered a written message that was read out to the DROI Members. The Chair announced that she would send a letter to Mr Osman on behalf of DROI to thank him for his message and invite him to Brussels on another occasion.

Human rights defenders and land-grabbing issues in the context of European investments in third countries



After an overall assessment of this issue by Ms Hanna Saarinen from Oxfam International, DROI Members had the chance to hear testimonies concerning three different cases.

The case of Honduras was poignantly evoked by Bertha Zúñiga Cáceres, member of the Civic Council of Indigenous and Popular Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) and daughter of the recently murdered

environmental activist Berta Cáceres. The position of the Dutch Development Bank (FMO), who provided parts of the funds for the project that Berta Cáceres was opposing, was presented by Ms Linda Broekhuizen, Chief Investment Officer. Two more case studies were discussed: that of Colombia, presented by Father Alberto Franco from the Intereclesial Commission for Justice and Peace, and that of Liberia, with a presentation by Mr Ali Kaba of The Sustainable Development Institute.

[Press release](#)

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Workshop on the human rights situation in North Korea

The main purpose of the workshop was to gain a deeper understanding of the situation and the political choices related to pursuing accountability for serious and persistent human rights violations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Members had the chance to hear excellent contributions by academics, civil society representatives and the Human Rights Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, Dr Lee. The EEAS Head of Division dealing with the region also gave a much appreciated contribution.

The discussion focused on pursuing accountability for crimes against humanity, calling for the UN Security Council to refer the DPRK situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the terms of the EU's policy of "critical engagement" with North Korea, the role of China, and overseas North Korean workers, including in EU Member States.

DROI Missions

Ad Hoc Mission to the 31st Session of the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva 14-15 March 2016

The Ad Hoc Mission to the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva was led by DROI Chair Elena Valenciano (S&D, ES) and further composed of Beatriz Becerra, Vice Chair (ALDE, ES), Andrzej Grzyb (EPP, PL), Ramona Mănescu (EPP, RO), Soraya Post (S&D, SV), Karol Karski (ECR, PL) and Judith Sargentini (Greens/EFA, NL).

Members met with the President of the Human Rights Council, H.E. Ambassador CHOI Kyong-lim, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Kate Gilmore and other high ranking UN officials, as well as civil society organizations. Furthermore, Members had a chance to meet the Special Rapporteurs on minority issues, Ms Rita Iszak-Ndiaye; Dr. Ahmed Shaheed on Iran, and Mr François Crepeau on the human rights of migrants.

Discussions focused primarily on the issues of migration and business and human rights, which are both high on the agenda of the DROI Subcommittee. All the interlocutors considered migration a cross-cutting issue with broader implications for the human rights of migrants in transit and destination countries, including the rights of children and women, which need to be addressed specifically.

The programme included discussion of the draft EU-Turkey agreement and its legal implications, as well as on safe and legal passage for migrants in order to combat traffickers and smugglers - a holistic approach was needed to address the root causes of migration as a possible pathway out of the current situation. Concerning business and human rights, the discussions focused on the EU's possible participation in the Inter-Governmental Working Group on business and human rights.

DROI Members stressed the importance of the Universal Periodic Review as a very positive mechanism and underlined their intention to invite many of the high-level interlocutors to meetings in Brussels or Strasbourg, including H.E. Ambassador Choi Kyong-lim.

[Press release](#)

DROI Delegation to Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia, 30 March - 2 April 2016



The DROI delegation was chaired by Josef Weidenholzer (Socialists & Democrats/ Austria). The other participating MEPs were Barbara Lochbihler (Greens/Germany), Andrey Kovatchev (European People's Party/Bulgaria),

David Martin (Socialists & Democrats/ UK), Lars Adaktusson (European People's Party/Sweden), Petras Austrevicius (ALDE /Lithuania) and Enrique Guerrero Salom (Socialists & Democrats/Spain).

The objective of the visit was to obtain information on the human rights situation in the country and to follow-up on the specific concerns set out in recent Parliament resolutions on Cambodia (July and November 2015).

The EP delegation had the opportunity to meet with key interlocutors on human rights issues such as the Chairman of the National Commission on Human Rights, the Minister of Justice, the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Interior, the Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Information of the National Assembly, as well as civil society organizations. In addition, Members met with the UN Special Representative on Human Rights in Cambodia and judges and prosecutors of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (the "*Khmer Rouge Tribunal*").

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The discussions focused on the issues of the shrinking political space and the restrictions placed on civil society activities by recent government measures that limit freedom of speech and freedom of association. MEPs insisted on the importance of democratic pluralism, opposed attempts to discredit opposition leaders and advocated for fundamental freedoms including freedom of speech and assembly. All interlocutors stressed the importance of the next elections and were supportive of an EU Election Observation Mission (EUEOM), notwithstanding the difficulties expected, including voter registration.

With respect to the general human rights situation in the country, there is widespread concern amongst the international community about restrictions imposed by the government on basic human rights and a deterioration of the general climate. While the country can be congratulated for abolishing the death penalty and opening up an office of the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, several laws recently passed by the National Assembly have placed restrictions on free speech and civil society activists. Members noted that there is a risk of a reduced space for civil society and activists although these play a legitimate and useful role in contributing to Cambodia's development. Land-grabbing, forced evictions and labour rights were identified as issues that need attention.

[Press release](#)

Work in Progress

[Implementation of the 2010 recommendations of Parliament on social and environmental standards, human rights and corporate responsibility \(2015/2038\)](#)

- Rapporteur for opinion: Godelieve Quisthoudt-Rowohl
- Deadline for amendments: 19 January
- Vote in AFET: 4 April 2016
- Vote in plenary: July 2016

[Human rights and migration in third countries \(2015/2316 \(INI\)\)](#)

- Rapporteur: Marie-Christine Vergiat
- Deadline for amendments: 17 March 2016
- Vote in AFET: 23 May (tbc)
- Vote in plenary: September 2016

[The fight against trafficking in human beings in the EU's external relations](#)

- Rapporteur: Barbara Lochbihler
- Deadline for amendments: 8 March 2016
- Vote in AFET: 23-24 May 2016
- Vote in plenary: July 2016

[Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with special regard to the Concluding Observations of the UN CPRD Committee \(2015/2258 \(INI\)\)](#)

- Rapporteur for opinion: Richard Howitt
- Deadline for amendments: 23 March 2016
- Vote in AFET: 23 May
- Vote in plenary: July 2016

[Corporate liability for serious human rights abuses in third countries 2015/2315 \(INI\)](#)

- Rapporteur: Ignazio Corrao
- Deadline for amendments: 22 April 2016
- Vote in AFET: 11 July 2016
- Vote in plenary: September 2016

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Urgency Resolutions

April 2016

- Pakistan, in particular the attack in Lahore, Honduras: situation of human rights defenders, Nigeria

March 2016

- Freedom of expression in Kazakhstan, Egypt, notably the case of Giulio Regeni, Democratic Republic of the Congo

[Link](#) to all resolutions

Links

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Calendar of DROI meetings 2016

The next DROI meetings will take place on the following days:

Monday 30 May, p.m.

Wednesday 15 June, a.m. and p.m.

Thursday 30 June, a.m.

Wednesday 13 July a.m. and p.m.

[DROI Calendar 2016](#)