



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK  
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان



## Advocacy Toolkit

EU and its Neighbours :

What scope for Human Rights NGOs?

**This toolkit** was developed by the EMHRN in order to equip you and other NGOs in the Euromed with knowledge and skills to enhance your capabilities to understand the EU decision-making process. It also nurtures the ambition to take you through the complex maze of the EU intricate machinery, and guide you on practical steps about how to best lobby the EU institutions and influence your respective national governments for a genuine and durable culture of human rights in the area.

This training manual further unpacks various concepts and contents that can be expanded upon during live/ interactive workshops. We hope it will improve and enhance knowledge, and create awareness on the opportunities to carry out advocacy work in the EU sphere.

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## Different types of EU actions

Defining **what action you want the EU to take**, will to a certain extent, depend on the issue or case, its seriousness and extent, whether it requires an urgent response, whether it's a specific or isolated incident or a systematic and on-going violation. The EU has different tools at its disposal which can be used accordingly. NGOs should obviously advocate measures which are most appropriate for a given situation, and for those which will have the most impact. However, it also depends on the resources at hand.

### Urgent vs non urgent

When your aim is to get a Human Rights Defender released, have the EU send representatives to observe a trial, or end threats made against an individual, urgent concrete action can typically be required from the EU **at any time** based on human rights guidelines.



#### EU Instruments

Concrete actions the EU can take are listed in the EU guidelines, such as visiting a HRD in prison, observing a trial, practical assistance to an individual, etc. Fixed structures with set calendar including: association council, subcommittees, ENP Action Plans negotiations and implementation, annual EU Progress Reports, etc.

If, on the other hand, your goal is reach a longer-term objective such as policy changes (e.g. advocating for a new law on association, improvement of detention conditions, abolition of death penalty, etc.) then you should contemplate a non-urgent action. This type of procedure can be developed through targeting some of the EU's **fixed structures** that meet annually such as Human Rights subcommittees and/or Association Councils, but also by influencing the general human rights objectives of the EU.

### Public vs non public



#### Something to remember

It's good to keep in mind that a public reaction is generally more difficult to obtain than a non-public démarche. In the same way, positioning at a high political level is harder to achieve than an action at a technical level.



#### EU Instruments

*EU public actions include: EU public statements, Statements of the EU ahead of the Association Council, Council Conclusions, Resolutions / Reports / Hearings of the European Parliament, questions by MEPs, measures by EU Member States such as sanctions, suspension of agreements, etc.*

*EU non-public actions include: confidential démarches, informally raising an issue in a joint meeting such as an Association Council, a subcommittee meeting, or getting MEPs to meet with Third Countries' authorities, etc.*

### Individual vs joint advocacy targets

Convincing a parliamentarian to raise human rights issues will be easier than obtaining a European Parliament Resolution. In the same way, it is easier to get an individual EU Member State to react than to convince 27 EU Member States with conflicting interests to take a strong position on human rights.



#### EU Instruments

*For individual actions: public statements of HR / VP, ENP Commissioner, questions / letters of MEPs, measures by one or more EU Member State(s), etc.*  
*Joint EU actions: adoption of ENP Action Plans, EU Statements, Statements of the EU ahead of the Association Council, Council Conclusions, EU démarches, raising a case in an Association Council or subcommittee, sanctions, suspension of Agreements, Resolutions / Reports of the European Parliament, etc.*

However, there is more weight behind a collective action or position.

### Human rights crisis and diplomacy

Extreme measures, reflecting a break within diplomatic relations such as sanctions or suspension of relations, can only be envisaged in major and systematic human rights violations. By nature, such measures will only be taken as a last resort by EU diplomacy.



#### EU Instruments

*Crisis reactions include: sanctions, suspension / non-upgrading of association agreements, etc.*

## Urgent – Short term actions

### Public statements

Public statements by the EU are an appropriate objective if you are dealing with both urgent situations / incidents and systemic / on-going issues. This can be effective, by giving high visibility to EU actions and damaging the public image of the authorities in question. It may also be of interest when you want to give moral support and legitimacy to local Human Rights Defenders. This can be done by the High Representative on behalf of the EU.



#### Useful Tip

*To get the EU to adopt a public statement, contact the Head of the Political Section / human rights focal point at the EU Delegation or – if it is a HRD case – the EU Liaison Officer on HRDs (usually also at the EU Delegation) and/or the Brussels Desk Officers responsible for the relevant country. In Brussels, the Human Rights units of the EEAS are also relevant. If you are dealing with a sensitive or difficult case, you might also want to initiate contacts at a higher level.*

If you are not based in Brussels, you can also ask the EU to issue public statements at a local level. This type of statement is generally agreed by the EU Heads of Mission and issued by the EU Delegation. In this case, you should contact the Head of Mission or Head of the Political Section at the EU Delegation.



#### To go further

*Public statements can also be made by the President of the Parliament, or by members of an EP delegation visiting a country. It is also possible to contact an MEP and request him or her to take a public position.*



#### In terms of timing

*Public statements should be requested immediately after an incident or violation has taken place.*

## Démarche (confidential)

This measure is relevant in all situations, but especially for serious, urgent cases. For an EU démarche, it is necessary to simultaneously contact the Head of the Political Section / human rights focal point at the EU Delegation. When doing advocacy, it is advisable to specify which authorities (ministries, parliament, etc.) the EU should address. It is necessary to tell the persons contacted the exact concerns the EU should raise. For this, it is relevant to contact the EU Delegation (Ambassador, or Head of Political Section, or human rights focal point). In Brussels, you can try to get EU officials to meet with the Ambassador of Third Countries.



### Useful Tip

*If it is a HRD case you are advocating for, you might want to contact the EU Liaison Officer on HRDs (usually based at the EU Delegation) and the Desk Officers responsible for the relevant country, both at geographic level (Maghreb / Middle East) and Human Rights units of the EEAS.*



### Something to remember

*Depending on the firmness of the position the EU adopts, this advocacy method can have a significant impact. This is usually done at local level by EU Missions. It can also be done by the EU Ambassador on behalf of the EU.*



### To go further

*Issues/cases can also be raised with the local authorities by the High Representative or Commissioner in charge of the ENP when they visit a country. Get in touch with the EU Delegation to obtain information regarding timing of the visit. You can either request a meeting with the High Representative/Commissioner or participate in meetings the High Representative/Commissioner has with local civil society organisations and NGOs.*

## Visiting a victim of a human rights violation in prison / under house arrest

This measure speaks for itself, in terms of situations in which it is appropriate. But even if the EU would like to carry out this measure, it may not always be possible due to a lack of co-operation from the local authorities. However, just attempting this measure can have a positive impact, for example by preventing or reducing ill-treatment of the person concerned.



### Useful tip

*You should advocate for this by contacting the EU Delegation (Head of Political Section / human rights focal point) or, if it is a Human Rights Defender, the Liaison Officer on HRDs.*

## Trial observation

This is a common form of intervention by the EU, particularly when individuals are on trial on trumped-up charges or are unlikely to receive a fair trial. The presence of foreign diplomats can sometimes have a positive impact in terms of the conduct and outcome of the trial.

Ideally, trial observation should be followed by a public statement in which the EU expresses an opinion about the proceedings and, if called for, a demand for corrective action to be taken by the authorities.



### Useful tip

*Trial observation is almost always carried out by EU Missions. Therefore, you should put a request for trial observation to the EU Delegation (Head of Political Section / human rights focal point) and the EU Liaison Officer on HRDs. You can also contact the embassy of an EU Member State (Deputy Head of Mission) who is known to be active on human rights issues and which can propose EU action. If you do so, provide briefing material detailing your concerns about the trial and provide information about the location and time of the hearing and observer accreditation procedures. Diplomats should always be kept updated on any changes.*



### In terms of timing

*Requests for trial observation should be made as far ahead of the hearing as possible, which means at least one week.*

## Concrete assistance to individuals

This measure is especially relevant for urgent cases of individuals, such as Human Rights Defenders, who are at immediate risk.



### Useful tip

You can advocate for EU assistance in relocation, the issuing of emergency visas (mentioned in the EU guidelines on HRDs) and provision of shelter in a neighbouring country or in Europe in the context of the EU Shelter City Initiative. You should also approach your local EU Liaison on HRDs to request such assistance as soon as possible.



### Something to remember<sup>1</sup>

The emergency fund for Human Rights Defenders at risk, managed under the EIDHR, allows the Commission to quickly give small grants of up to 10.000 euros to HRDs, direct to individuals or organisations who are in need of urgent support.

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, EIDHR, Small grants, <http://www.eidhr.eu/side-panels/human-rights-defenders/small-grants>

## Mid- to Long-term actions

### Statements of the EU ahead of the Association Council

Obtaining mention in a selected Statement of the EU ahead of the Association Council is another form of a public position. Since these meetings are only held once a year and a lot of issues compete to get a mention in the Statement, you should usually decide to start the process for serious, on-going/ systematic violations, or for issues related to the human rights context (repressive policies or laws, etc.).



### Useful tip

To get a mention in a Statement of the EU ahead of the Association Council, contact the EU Delegation in the country concerned and (if possible) the EEAS Desk Officer; both are responsible for the initial draft of the statement. To include or maintain the reference to a specific issue in the EU Statement, you will also need to win the support of EU embassies in the country and/or members of the MAMA working party at the relevant EU Member States' Permanent Representations in Brussels.



### Something to remember

Highly sensitive cases may need to be addressed to EU Ambassadors at the PSC level in Brussels, who will approve the final statement.



### In terms of timing

This contact should ideally be made six weeks in advance of the Association Council meeting.

## EU Council Conclusions

EU Council Conclusions are a form of public statement, because the EU publicly raises human rights violations and states its position on these violations and the measures it is taking, will taking, or is considering taking.



### Something to remember

Council Conclusions are a strong political message from the EU. They can be used as a basis for further advocacy. Do not only advocate towards Member States who are sympathetic but also towards Member States who block or water down references to a specific issue.

Getting a mention in an EU Council Conclusion is appropriate for both specific cases or incidents and systemic / on-going violations. Due to the time involved in drafting and adoption by the 27 Member States, it may not be appropriate for urgent cases. It is the geographic Desk Officer of the EEAS in Brussels who generally first drafts the EU Council Conclusions. Then EU Member States' MAMA working group discusses this in Brussels and proposes it to the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), through the Political and Security Committee (PSC).



### In terms of timing

In the case of the FAC, advocacy should take place at least four weeks before the meeting during which your issue/ case is to be addressed. MAMA will agree on the text it will propose to the FAC in the week before the meeting takes place.

## Meeting of the human rights sub-committee or Association Council

This measure can be used for both individual/ specific cases and longer-term/ structural issues.



### Useful tip

You should contact the Head of the Political Affairs section at the EU Delegation to know when the sub-committee/ Association Council meeting will take place and to get a specific issue/ case on the agenda. Request that an issue/ case is put on the agenda and provide briefing material to the EU Delegation at local level whenever you can, preferably during a face-to-face meeting.

At a technical and dedicated meeting on human rights, you can provide more detailed input and recommendations for a human rights sub-committee meeting. However, as it is a high-level and general political meeting, you should focus on one or two human rights issues for the Association Council.



### To go further

Contact can be made in Brussels with the Desk Officer for the relevant country at the EEAS. You can also participate in the consultations – at the local level or in Brussels – that the EU holds with NGOs before subcommittee meetings.



### Something to remember

Follow-up may be carried out by participating in the debriefing with NGOs after the sub-committee meeting. Since the agenda of the meeting is jointly agreed by the EU and its partners, when possible, target the government of the country concerned on the issue or case as well.



### In terms of timing

Request that an issue is placed on the agenda and provide briefing material at least one month before the subcommittee meeting takes place.

## Resolution of the European Parliament



### Useful tip

To obtain an EP resolution, you should contact key MEPs, the chairperson of the relevant EP (sub) committee or delegation and /or administrators of the political groups. Try and win the support of several political groups and at least one of the bigger groups. Providing them with supporting documentation /a briefing may be useful. The same information should be provided to the human rights unit<sup>2</sup> of the EP.

<sup>2</sup> To contact the Human Rights Unit, send your information to: [droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu)

When asking for a Resolution, ask the EP to :

- Follow-up on a hearing on a specific issue or country in an EP (sub) committee or EP delegation.
- Ask for a debate and the adoption of a resolution on the human rights situation in a country at a plenary session of the European Parliament in which the EU High Representative participates.
- Get the plenary of the European Parliament to adopt an ‘urgency resolution’ on the human rights situation in a country, or on a particular issue or incident.
- Put pressure on the EU Council and the EEAS.



### Something to remember

As an NGO, you can also advocate for a resolution by making a presentation at a hearing / meeting of a parliamentary committee (or sub-committee), or at another public event organised by a committee or by MEPs. To do this, contact the chair of the relevant committee, the secretariat of the committee, or one or more key MEPs who are members of the committee.



### In terms of timing

This information needs to be provided to the EP political groups and human rights unit at least three weeks before a plenary session of the parliament.



### To go further

Another strategy is to meet members of a delegation of the European Parliament during their visit to the country concerned. Contact your local EU Delegation, or the Chair or Secretariat of the EP Delegation to find out when such visits take place and request a meeting.

Prepare written documents for these meetings and include precise details on the issue/case and recommendations regarding what needs to be done and action(s) the EU should take. Follow-up afterwards with the MEPs that you met. Make sure that MEPs follow-up on the resolution, by asking whether the actions they requested in the resolution have been taken into account by other EU institutions.

### Question / request by a MEP

MEPs can ask the EU Council or Commission, through a written or oral question, what they are doing to address a specific human rights issue in a country.



### Something to remember

Since the EU High Representative is obliged to respond personally to letters from MEPs, you may want to ask MEPs to write a letter requesting that she take action on an issue or case. The issue/case will then stand more chance of coming to her attention. Contact individual MEPs, and provide them with background information, including recommendations for action the EU should take.

### Influence the EU ENP Action Plan with a Mediterranean country

Besides advocating to get the EU or individual Member States to take specific action on human rights issues, NGOs can try to influence the regional or country human rights policies of the EU.



### Something to remember

The ENP Action Plans are renewed every three to five years. Getting an issue included in the priorities of the ENP Action Plan should ensure that the EU monitors the issue on an on-going basis, that relevant reforms receive EU support, and that the issue is on the agenda of meetings such as the human rights sub-committee; all of these may have a positive effect. However, it is then crucial to be aware of further opportunities to influence the negotiation process.



### Useful tip

NGOs can advocate for this by contacting the EU Delegation (the Head of the Political Section / human rights focal point) to find out when a new Action Plan will be negotiated and about the opportunities for giving input during that process. Follow-up actions may include monitoring the implementation of the commitments made in the Action Plan, as any lack of progress can be mentioned in the annual EU ENP Progress Reports.

Any lack of progress should be reported to the EU by providing documentary evidence to the EU Delegation, by having face-to-face meetings with the EU Delegation, or by participating in consultations organised by the EU Delegation to gather input from local NGOs. It may be worth keeping in touch with the EU Delegation in order to know when these consultations will take place and to have input on who will be invited. It is also useful to target EU institutions based in Brussels.

## Influencing general regional or local policies of the EU with Mediterranean countries

For instance:

- The EU's **mobility partnership** with a country: the persons to contact are the EU Delegation (Head of Political Affairs Section), the country Desk Officers at the EEAS and the person responsible (International Relations Officer) for the country at the International Affairs Unit of the Home Affairs Directorate-General of the European Commission in Brussels.
- The EU's local **Human Rights Country Strategy** (adopted for three years). It is possible to be consulted on the drafting, implementation and evaluation of this strategy. For this purpose, it is necessary to contact the Head of the Political Section / human rights focal point at the EU Delegation and / or the geographical Desks and the HR unit of the EEAS in Brussels.



### To go further

*You may wish to advocate for increased transparency of EU policies and procedures, and for the accessibility of documents. In particular, advocacy can be part of any systematic consultation of NGOs in the drafting, implementation and evaluation of policies between Third Countries and the EU.*

## Sanctions, Suspension / non-upgrading of Association Agreements or other Co-operation Agreements

Sanctions might be appropriate in situations of serious and systematic human rights violations. They can take the form of restricting admission / freezing the funds of individuals responsible for human rights violations, economic sanctions, etc. Like sanctions, **suspension / non-upgrading of Association Agreements or other Co-operation Agreements** can apply to situations of serious and on-going human rights violations.



### Useful tip

*Advocacy efforts need to be forceful and consistent if you want a sanction to be taken. Focus on the highest political level in the EEAS and the EU Council (MAMA working group, PSC, HR/VP) in Brussels. Advocacy can also be done at the local level with the EU Missions, and most effectively in the capitals of EU Member States with the Foreign Affairs Ministry and through national EU Member States' parliaments.*



### To go further

*To achieve results for such a strong measure to be taken at EU level, networking and joint pressure with other NGOs is key.*



### Useful tip

*If you want to increase pressure on the EU Council and EEAS, you could also target MEPs and members of national parliaments. Bear in mind that because the EP and national parliaments have to give their consent to international co-operation agreements and in the area of migration and asylum, since the EP co-decides.*

## Measures by EU Member States

Measures by individual EU Member States can sometimes be as – or even more – effective than actions taken by the EU, particularly if the Member State has important influence on the local authorities and acts firmly. For this kind of advocacy work, remember to collaborate with other NGOs from the Member States in question.



### Useful tip

*To advocate for an EU Member State to take action on human rights issues in a country:*

- *Contact the embassy of EU Member State at local level, either the Ambassador / Head of Mission or the Deputy Head of Mission.*
- *Lobby the EU Member State's Minister of Foreign Affairs or staff of foreign affairs ministry in the capital of their country capitals.*
- *Persuade members of the national parliament to ask questions or propose resolutions urging the Member State to take action on a human rights issue / case in a country or regarding migration / asylum policies with this country.*
- *Meet with Foreign Ministers, foreign ministry staff, national parliamentarians or other national officials when they are visiting your country. The embassies can be contacted to find out when such visits will take place and to request a meeting.*

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