

**EMHRN WORK PROGRAM FOR 2008-2010
Barcelona December 12-14 2008**

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1. Introduction

This document provides presents the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network's (EMHRN) work program for 2008 to 2010.

It is based on the EMHRN Strategy document (2006-2010) adopted at the 7th general assembly in Madrid 2006 and follows-up on the Work program for 2006-2008 adopted at the same occasion..

These documents were built on an analysis of the human rights situation in the region and of the development of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and the EU in terms of human rights. They were also built on a presentation of the EMHRN itself identifying its core vision, mission and values.

The present document starts with a summary of the Strategy and past Work program. It thereafter proceeds with a presentation of how the EMHRN intends to adjust its work in the light of 2006 and 2007 developments. Then the different elements of the work program are presented.

1.1 The Human Rights Situation

In its Strategy Document and Work program, the EMHRN acknowledged that some human rights progress had taken place in parts of the region and it took note of the momentum created for democracy movements by outside pressure.

Nevertheless the overall conclusion was that the region is still plagued by severe problems: conflicts and war; regular and systematic violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and democratic principles; erosion of civil and political rights; structural problems within the judiciaries; lack of institutional capacity to sustain reform such as women's participation in public life; exclusion of youth from decision-making; increased barriers to migration and human exchange having serious effects on rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, etc.

With regard to the Barcelona process it was noted that there is a serious gap between the declared commitments to human rights in the Barcelona Declaration and the human rights situation in the region. There are also serious discrepancies between the human rights instruments set in place and the lack of implementation of these. In fact, and with few exceptions, it is difficult to say that the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership led to improvements of the human rights situation in the region.

That being said, it was also noted that neither the EU nor the South Mediterranean are monolithic entities. In many instances there is a keen and genuine interest in promoting human rights within and between EU member state governments, and sometimes also in the South. It was also noted that the EU has made progress in terms of developing human rights instruments foreseen in the Barcelona Declaration and that the recent European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) might provide opportunities for dealing pro-actively with human rights.

On the basis of this analysis the EMHRN decided to work on two issues of primordial importance for the future of the region, namely the question of *human rights and democratisation* and the question of setting human rights and humanitarian law at the centre of initiatives aimed at improving *the security of human beings*.

The EMHRN identified strategic entry points to deal with these matters¹, namely

- Concerning Human Rights and Democratisation:

¹ Based on an analysis of ongoing initiatives in the region aimed at avoiding duplication

- Freedom of Association
 - The Independence and Impartiality of the Judiciary
 - Women's Rights and Gender Mainstreaming
 - Human Rights Education and Addressing Young People
- Concerning the Security of Human Beings:
- The Middle East Conflict
 - The Rights of Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers
 - Economic and Social Rights

At the same time the EMHRN members agreed that influencing the EMP, the ENP and EU human rights instruments would be an important mean to produce positive human rights results on the ground.

1.2 The EMHRN

Concerning the EMHRN itself the General Assembly agreed that the mission of the EMHRN would be to promote and strengthen human rights and democratic reform within the framework of the Barcelona process and EU-Arab cooperation frameworks. Rooted in civil society, the Network would seek to develop and strengthen partnerships between NGOs, disseminate human rights values and increase its capacity in this regard.

As such, the EMHRN's vision would be to develop into a regional forum for human rights NGOs and become a major regional source of expertise, raising awareness of human rights and democratic reform.

Hence, the General Assembly set networking at the heart of the EMHRN's identity aimed at bringing often disperse NGOs and their initiatives together in a common, regional human rights framework.

It further agreed that the establishing and running of thematic working groups composed of member organisations should be a core methodology of the EMHRN as past experience and independent evaluations show that working groups enhance

- Participants' sense of ownership of the EMHRN
- Participants' capacity to work with human rights through improved knowledge and learning, and sharing of methodologies
- Establishing of new contacts and partners
- Capacity to manoeuvre in a regional context, including in relation to inter-governmental bodies, such as responding to changes in the region and providing structured inputs to the EMP, ENP and the EU
- Intercultural understanding
- Cooperation between North and South

The GA decided to further develop working groups in the above mentioned areas and proposed specific projects each working group would implement in order to structure its work while providing them with space and time to develop internal and external dynamics of their own.

These networking efforts was to be sustained by advocacy activities vis-à-vis the EMP, ENP and EU institutions, efforts to build partnerships beyond the human rights community as well as actions of solidarity and support when members or their activities were in crisis – including close cooperation with the EuroMed Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF).

2. Adjusting the EMHRN Work Program

One and a half year after the adoption of the EMHRN strategy paper and work program many of the points made above remain valid. However, important changes also took place in the region and within the EMHRN which need to be considered when initiating the coming three year work period.

2.1. Concerning the region

Since the EMHRN General Assembly all talk of an Arabic spring in terms of democracy seemed to die out and human rights discourse became significantly weakened. South and East Mediterranean civil society was increasingly caught in geo-politic tensions beyond its reach. This was primarily due to the situation in Iraq (and indications that the US in order to get out of Iraq is bound to compromise with current Arab regimes); the growing tension between the US (and Arab allies) and Iran; and the effects of conglomerate sets of factors such as the worsened situation in Israel- Palestine, strengthened Islamist movements; and the waged 'fight against terrorism'.

The situation in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan is to a large extent conditioned by the broader regional conflict - including the situation in Israel and the West Bank and Gaza - in the light of which regimes in countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria have been able to consolidate at the expense of democracy and human rights.

Human rights respect decreased in the EuroMed region since 2006. In this regard the response to the growing refugee crisis and migrant fluxes is worrying (i.e. the displacement of 1,7 million Iraqi refugees; the worsened situation of Palestinian refugees; human rights violations experienced by Sudanese refugees in Egypt and Sub-Saharan migrants and asylum seekers in North Africa). With few exceptions, large parts of Europe reacted to these facts on the ground by increased criminalizing of undocumented migrants and sought to circumvent its own responsibilities by externalising forced migrant protection through measures of open sea interceptions, frontier control and the like.

The past two and half year witnessed a growing disillusion by civil society with the EU as a human rights and democracy promoter in the EuroMed region as Europe seems unable to mobilize political means and actions to bring the region out of the current turmoil.

The almost complete silence about the human rights situation in the South Mediterranean when launching the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean on 13 July 2008 led to further discomfort about the role played by the EU in the region.

In addition, although the ENP does provide new instruments and technical possibilities to promote human rights, the latest regional and national strategy plans and National Indicative Programs brought comfort to the current regimes in place rather than challenging them on discrepancies between their current practice and their commitments to human rights and democratic principles.

2.2. Concerning the EMHRN

Since early 2006 the EMHRN was busy implementing its work program in an inclusive and participatory process while growing in terms of organisation and staff.

In the first months of 2006 the Executive Committee finalised a draft strategy document and work program and presented these to the General Assembly (GA) in May 2006. The GA welcomed the documents where after the EMHRN launched a call for participation in its working groups with clear and transparent criteria for admission of participants. By the end of 2006 about 90 human rights defenders were active in the EMHRN's working groups on freedom of association; justice; gender; human rights education; Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians; and Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers (while the EMHRN explored the possibility of establishing a working group on economic and social rights), producing reports, taking advocacy initiatives and generating synergies and new encounters. At the same time the EMHRN opened antennas in Jordan and Morocco (in addition to its office in Brussels) while conducting training seminars and public encounters on the European Neighbourhood policy in selected South Mediterranean countries.

In all, the EMHRN's main focus became the build-up of sustainable mid- and long-term structures for participation and activities.

However, this emphasis and the parallel launch of specific projects within each working group meant that the EMHRN only to a smaller degree was able to react to current issues and members' urgent concerns, as well

as communicating its positions and doings to the outside world. The focus on project and working group management also meant that coherence and overview stood in danger of being lost.

The EMHRN believes that the mid-term and long term work initiated by the working groups and their activities should be consolidated in 2008, 2009 and 2010. They provide and sustain basic human rights work in a time where human rights are under increased attack; they give sustainability to the work of the EMHRN and help build capacity to human rights organisations within their field of specialisation. They deserve and need time to grow and develop and to show the expected results over the next coming years.

However, the EMHRN also wish to correct deficiencies and adjust its work to the political changes that took place.

2.3. The Work Programme 2008-2010

The past year development poses challenges to human rights defenders in the region who struggle to identify adequate response strategies.

The EMHRN will organise its 8th general assembly by the end of 2008 and a main item will be to discuss ways forward in the light of the growing disillusion with Europe and marginalisation of human rights discourse in the South.

The EMHRN believes that the choice of working on democratisation and the security of human beings in the EuroMed region remain valid for the region. Hence, it will continue work within its current areas of activities: freedom of association; justice; gender; human rights education; Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians; and Migrants, Refugees and Asylum seekers; and economic and social rights.

It suggest to add more coherence to that work by increasingly focussing on how the development of democracy and the security of human beings within the thematic field of work of the EMHRN and EMP, ENP and EU policies relate to one another. It is expected that such synthetic analysis will help human rights organisations – and hopefully decision makers – to strategize their work in relation to EuroMed policies.

It also suggested initiating exploring other avenues for regional advocacy work that is complementary to the EMHRN's current work on the EU such as the identifying added values of the Network addressing international agendas such as those of the UN human rights bodies, or regional bodies such as the Arab League.

The EMHRN will also explore ways to promote the role of young people and make their presence, contributions and interests in human rights work more visible

Finally, the EMHRN will improve its capacity to address short term issues by down scaling the 'project load' of the working groups while providing them with more time and resources to respond to immediate concerns and campaigns of members (and other human rights NGOs). In addition it will develop its solidarity work, and also facilitate the EMHRN's and the working groups' capacity to react to changing circumstances by providing the Network with regular briefs about key human rights developments in the region.

The following pages move into the EMHRN work programme and sets out activities to be carried out over the next three years.

The work programme basically aims at 'giving flesh' to the EMHRN strategy² while adapting it to the changes that took place in the region since the strategy was adopted. It aims at

- Strengthening the EMHRN members' capacity to promote and protect human rights at the local and regional level through strategic interventions in the following areas:

² Cf. www.euromedrights.net

- Human Rights and Democratisation:
 - Freedom of Association,
 - Justice,
 - Women’s Rights
 - Human Rights Education and Addressing Young People
- The Security of Human Beings:
 - The Middle East Conflict
 - The Rights of Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers
 - Economic and Social Rights
- Using and monitoring the human rights and democratisation instruments of the EU, the ENP and the EMP where relevant and increasing members’ and local NGO capacity to act in this regard.
- Developing membership support instruments in the field of solidarity and training.
- Engaging in and stimulating networking and partnerships beyond the network at regional and local level
- Engaging the media in the work of the EMHRN and its members
- Engaging in and stimulating discussions and debate about the overall development in the region and response strategies in this regard
- Maintaining and developing a high level of ownership by members of EMHRN activities, as well as transparency and democratic principles in the executive bodies and administration of the Network . This includes the systematic implementation of gender mainstreaming into the EMHRN’s activities.

An external evaluation of the EMHRN’s work will be carried out while implementing activities helping the EMHRN to readjust and strengthen the implementation where needed. .

3. Activity report

3.1. Human Rights and Democratisation

3.1.1 Freedom of Association

Objectives

*The **human rights framework** of the activity is the full implementation of human rights values and international standards pertaining to freedom of association in the EuroMed region.*

*The **general objective** is to develop capacity for sustained civil society monitoring, expertise and action on freedom of association conducive to change in legislation - in particular in the South and East Mediterranean area - where relevant and, by extension, conducive to democratic reform.*

*The **short term objective** is to further develop the establishing of a regional civil society instrument to monitor freedom of association and, through networking, increasing NGOs capacity to work on this issue*

within their constituencies. A short term objective is also to support ongoing work and campaigns of members and partners on freedom of association, and advocacy and media work in this regard

Background

Freedom of association is a key to human rights promotion and protection, ensuring the dignity of individuals by allowing them full participation in societal life. It is crucial for the development of democratic institutions: political pluralism, trade unions, civil society etc, and for human rights defenders' ability to engage in promoting a human rights culture. It is an indicator of democracy development and of the level of repression of civil society and human rights defenders. It is therefore important to set it high on civil society agendas.

The EMHRN has established a Working group on Freedom of Association and the publication of two Annual reports on Freedom of Association has been successfully completed, including points for measuring progress or setbacks on a country level as well as recommendations for action. The reports are developed by the Working group which has been increasingly active in monitoring new developments in the region and supporting local NGO work.

The Activities

The project will follow-up on ongoing work by:

1. Drafting annual reviews on the situation of freedom of association in legislation and practice – including proposals for ways/indicators to measure progress or setbacks; the reports are meant to regularly set the question of freedom of association on the agenda of decision makers, NGOs and media in the region.
2. Organising working group meetings for EMHRN members and resource persons in the Arab and EuroMed region aimed at developing regional networking. In this regard The EMHRN will liaise with other regional and local initiatives in the region.
3. Developing and maintaining a section on freedom of association on the EMHRN's web site.
4. Dissemination of the results of its monitoring activities to the media, civil society groups and governments while support ongoing actions and campaigns by civil society

3.1.2 The Independence and the Impartiality of the Judiciary

Objectives

*The **human rights framework** of this activity is the establishment of an independent and impartial judiciary in the South and East Mediterranean region based on international human rights standards.*

*The **general objective** is the consolidation of networks and groups of actors in South and East Mediterranean societies with capacity to influence the judiciaries towards reform.*

*The **short term objective** is to further develop and sustain spaces for free debate between key actors concerning the independence and impartiality of the judiciary in order to support processes and initiatives towards reform.*

Background

The South Mediterranean countries suffer from deficits in their judiciary systems. In most cases the judiciaries do not assume their role according to rule of law principles; they are institutionally allied to the political power in place whilst playing a complementary role to the police in repressing rights and fundamental freedoms.

A 'vicious circle' exists, whereby the judiciary helps maintaining authoritarian and non-democratic regimes in place while such regimes are instrumental in blocking reform towards greater independence of the judiciary. In this context, the developing of spaces for free debate between civil society, lawyers, magistrates, etc. on questions relating to the independence and impartiality of the judiciary is a way forward.

The EMHRN has initiated a process of supporting free debate on the reform of the Judiciary in the region. It successfully conducted seminars in Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, and (outside) Tunisia attended by judges, lawyers, NGOs and government representatives. In each of the mentioned countries experts drafted reports on the question of the independence and impartiality of the judiciary aimed producing an overview of the situation as well as recommendations for reform initiatives at the national level.

The EMHRN also conducted a study of reform initiatives undertaken by governments and inter-governmental institutions (EU, UNDP, World Bank, etc.). The national reports and the regional overview were presented at a regional seminar in Brussels early 2008.

Finally, the EMHRN, in cooperation with other international organisations, followed efforts by Arab magistrates (led by Egyptian judges) to create an independent Arab union of judges and find it important to support this initiative.

Activities

The EMHRN believes it succeeded in starting-up a promising process around the question of the independence and impartiality of the judiciary that it is important to consolidate and develop. Hence, the proposed activities involve extension and follow-up to the ongoing activities by

- Conducting national meetings in Egypt and Algeria similar to the ones conducted in Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia. They will aim at stimulating debate on the independence and impartiality of the judiciary and also promote the drafting of a national report on this question.
- Organising follow-up seminars where feasible in the target countries aimed at presenting the national reports and recommendations for reform.
- Promoting and supporting the efforts to establish an Arab union of judges *inter alia* by inviting judges active in these efforts to take part in the above-mentioned seminars, and otherwise allowing them to meet with fellow magistrates in the Arab countries to prepare for the establishment of the said Union.
- Conducting regional working group meetings on the judiciary twice a year aimed at ensuring coordination by stakeholders of the above process, developing synergies between the various activities and developing/sustaining a regional civil society perspective on developments in the field of justice. A particular focus will lie on the question of justice and counter-terrorism measures and the inter-linkages between the North and the South of the Mediterranean in that regard.
- A task of the Working group will be to explore the idea of creating a pool of trial observation teams that will monitor trials that are emblematic for the situation of the judiciaries in the region. Trial missions will have an important function as a protection mechanism, as stimulating debates about the judiciaries and building civil society capacity to monitor the judiciaries.

3.1.3 Women's Rights, Gender Equality and Mainstreaming

Objectives

The **human rights framework** of this activity is the full implementation of human rights values and international standards relating to women's rights and the achievement of gender equality in the Euro-Mediterranean region so that men and women can enjoy equal human rights and participate on equal terms in the development of their societies.

The **general objective** is that key civil society networks and groups of actors in the EuroMed region effectively monitor government policies within the process of achieving gender equality within the context of the Barcelona Process. Union for the Mediterranean and the European Neighbourhood Policy EuroMed region and actively integrate gender mainstreaming into their work.

The **short term objectives** are to:

- *Further enhance knowledge of gender mainstreaming and the capacity of NGOs to integrate it into daily work;*
- *Further promote cooperation between women's rights and human rights organisations and networks to promote gender equality within their organisations*
- *Further increase awareness about gender discrimination in the region and monitor public policies in this regard, in particular the Istanbul Action Plan on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society.*

Background

Gender equality and mainstreaming is another key issue for democracy. There are no human rights without women's rights and there is no democratic reform without gender equality and anti discrimination. Women's rights cannot advance if human rights discourse does not embrace men and women equally. Several reports have documented wide gaps between human rights standards and realities concerning women in the EuroMed region

At the same time, women's rights groups have emerged as vibrant, innovate and efficient civil society groups in terms of networking, advocacy and public awareness raising, and several initiatives exist on a regional level. However, the promotion of women's rights and gender equality suffers from the non-integration of women's rights issues into general human rights and civil society activities. Women's rights issues tend to be discussed only by women, and women's networks live separate lives from generalist human rights informal or formal networks. This is why special initiatives regarding rights based approach to gender equality and mainstreaming are needed and can bring added value to ongoing work.

In this context the EMHRN welcomed that the Euro-Med Ministerial Conference on 'Strengthening the Role of Women in Society', under the auspices of the Finnish Presidency (November 2006), succeeded in adopting a common platform for promoting gender equality in the region. The Plan contains reference to shared international, regional, and national commitments of the EMP partners, not the least the reference to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Also the Partners' committed themselves to achieving gender equality, preventing all forms of discrimination and ensuring the protection of rights of women. Finally, the Plan incorporates a review mechanism.

The activities

The EMHRN has established a WG on women's rights and it is in the process of organising training courses on gender mainstreaming for NGOs. The EMHRN was also very active in advocating for a strong Action Plan in Istanbul. The EMHRN wishes to consolidate and develop these activities and suggest to:

- Strengthen networking and gender mainstreaming by conducting bi-annual working group meetings in order to discuss, monitor and implement the following:

- Promoting gender mainstreaming and in this regard conducting training courses for human rights and civil society organisations
- Promoting gender mainstreaming within the EMHRN organisations and executive bodies
- Supporting civil society campaigns and initiatives pertaining to gender equality and women's rights (such as the campaign on lifting the reservations to the CEDAW)
- Monitoring the Barcelona process: Union for the Mediterranean, the European Neighbourhood Policy and other governmental policies relevant for the region. Monitoring should in particular target the Action Plan on 'Strengthening the Role of Women in Society', adopted by the EuroMed Partners in Istanbul, November 2006. In this regard the EMHRN aims at contributing actively to the agenda of the 2009 EuroMed Follow-up Conference to the Istanbul meeting.
- Maintaining an EMHRN antenna in Jordan to deal with gender issue in the EuroMed region.

3.1.4 Human Rights Education (HRE)

Objectives

The **human rights framework** of this project is to ensure broad dissemination of a human rights culture and values in the EuroMed region through educational activities.

The **general objective** is to generalise networking of human rights NGO in the field of education and develop their capacity to deliver and advocate for learning rooted in human rights based values as well as policies in this regard

The **short term objective** is to

- Further develop networking among human rights NGOs dealing with HRE in the Euro-Mediterranean region
- Engage NGOs in systematic exchange about methodologies and approaches for human rights based learning
- Engage NGOs in assessing public policies regarding HRE and how to impact on these as civil society

Background

There is no genuine human rights respect and no democracy without the dissemination of a human rights culture. Today much is left to do in the region as a whole in order to develop a genuine human rights culture due to oppressive environments, double standards of *Realpolitik*, lack of development and the impacts of globalisation.

A recent survey, Human Rights Education in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, commissioned by the EMHRN reports about a number of good practices among NGOs engaged in HRE. However it also shows a widespread lack of consistency and sustainability in the work being done. Many NGOs do not have a clear vision of their work or feasible, practical strategies. Only few organisations display a systematic approach in developing and adapting educational methodologies to their work and many are weak, and under-resourced when doing human rights education.

Developing networking and exchanges among NGOs engaged in human rights education are important entry points in this regard.

The Activities

The EMHRN has established a working group on human rights education that has been engaged in mutual exchanges about educational methodologies and in organising several Summer Schools for young human rights activists. The last Summer school produced a HRE resource and established an informal alumni network.

The EMHRN also took the initiative to initiate an informal network of organisers of human rights Summer Schools in the EuroMed region aimed at exchanging experiences, cooperating on identifying and exchanging trainers.

The EMHRN wishes to continue ongoing work and organising

- Bi-annual regional working group meetings aimed at
 - Promoting networking of NGOs engaged in human rights education, inter alia through seeking to organise a series of seminars dealing with the problem areas identified by the EMHRN report on Human Rights Education in the Euro-Mediterranean Region
 - Discussing and exchanging educational methodologies
 - Discussing and monitoring public policies regarding human rights education
 - Supporting campaigns and initiatives of civil society in the region
 - Preparing an annual Summer School on Human Rights Education being testing grounds for networking and developing of educational methodologies.

In addition the EMHRN wishes to support the informal network of Summer School organisers and eventual informal networks coming out the Summer Schools by facilitating contacts and exchanges and occasional meetings.

3.2. Human Rights and the Security of Human Beings

3.2.1 Palestine, Israel and Palestinians

Objectives

The **human rights framework** of the project is the full implementation of international human rights standards and international humanitarian law relating to conflict prevention, management and resolution concerning the Middle East conflict and Israeli occupation.

The **general objective** is to create a regional civil society advocacy forum aimed at raising awareness about the need for the EU, the ENP and EMP governments to set the respect for human rights and international humanitarian law at the heart of peace promotion.

The **short term objective** is to further develop the activities of the EMHRN WG on Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians to become a key critical human rights advocacy forum on EU policies pertaining to Israel and Palestine.

The Mediterranean area is torn by conflicts. It is the region in the world hosting one of the largest numbers of refugees per capita. The most enduring conflict is the Middle East conflict. It is emblematic of the region and a main reason for the stalemate of the EMP. Like other conflicts, it has suffered from the failure of the conflicting parties and the great powers to place respect for human rights and international humanitarian law at the heart of conflict prevention, management and resolution. Promoting respect for human rights and international humanitarian law is crucial for the Middle East in particular and for the region in general.

The EMHRN members have agreed that the EMHRN can bring added value to current human rights advocacy and awareness raising by concentrating on advocacy and lobbying efforts in Europe in cooperation with its Israeli, Palestinian, Arab and European members as well as other civil society partners. The EMHRN working group on Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians (composed of Israeli, Palestinian, Arab and European NGOs), its reports and missions has increasingly become a reference point for advocacy in Europe. Also EMHRN work on the European Neighbourhood Policy in relation to Israel has gained recognition.

Activities

The activity consists in consolidating and developing current activity and involves:

- Working group meetings strengthening the capacity of the Working group on Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians to become a key vehicle for advocating a human rights approach to the conflict and to occupation.
- Researching and publicising reports on the relations between the EU, Israel and Palestine dealing with key human rights issues in the OPT and inside Israel; How the EU (EP, Commission and Council plus member states) deals with and reacts to these developments; and critical analysing whether the EU complies with its obligations according to its own treaties, international law and EU Guide Lines on Human Rights
- Developing the capacity of participating organisations and individuals involved to advocate within the framework of the EMP and ENP and to find their way within the EU institutions and their policies (in Brussels as well as EU delegations)
- Developing cooperation with other civil society organisations promoting respect for human rights, international law and international humanitarian law in relation to the situation in Israel and Palestine

The activities will have a focus on the situation in GAZA and will be supplemented by missions when deemed relevant.

3.2.2 The Rights of Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Objectives

The **human rights framework** of the activity is the full implementation of international human rights standards and international humanitarian law regarding migrants', asylum seekers and refugees, in particular

those relating to the Geneva Conventions; the Convention on Migrant Workers and their families; the Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and relevant ILO Conventions.

The **general objective** is to:

- Strengthen regional civil society cooperation on policies, projects and exchange of information related to the rights of migrants and refugees.
- Engage in dialogue with governments and EU institutions on questions relating to human rights, migration, refugee and asylum issues
- Develop the capacity of local organisations in the South Mediterranean to handle issues relating to migrants', refugees' and asylum seekers' rights.

The **short term objective** of the activity is to:

Further develop a human rights based civil society platform for cooperation on questions pertaining to the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers including the setting-up of alert missions on emblematic cases of violations of migrants or asylum seekers rights.

Background

Promoting Migrants', Refugees' and Asylum Seekers' rights is equal to bringing human rights concerns to the centre of EuroMed relations. The level of protection of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is a key indicator of the EMP governments' readiness to place human exchange and interaction above narrow (soft) security interests and to engage in genuine partnerships. The management of migration and refugee protection is also an indicator of their willingness to share responsibilities and to comply with human rights when they are the most needed, i.e. when people are in a vulnerable situation, at risk and in need of help.

Only a few Centres or NGOs in the South Mediterranean region deal with the migrants', asylum seekers' and refugees' situation. Also, there has been little interchange between actors such as human rights organisations in the South, migrant and refugee organisations in Europe, and European refugee councils. There is a need to bring relevant NGOs together in a regional context to engage in dialogue on how to deal with migration and asylum seekers and to broaden the capacity of NGOs in the South to deal with these matters.

The basic aim of the project is to contribute to developing an NGO 'infrastructure' of knowledge and partnership on the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; to provide spaces for discussion and exchange on these issues; and to prepare training and education that would help building up capacity in the region.

Activities

The EMHRN has already initiated a working group on the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Based on amongst other fact finding research reports and training on EU policies the WG is starting to build up a common agenda. The EMHRN has also launched a regional Migration and Alert Mission instrument to act on emblematic cases of violation of migrants and asylum seekers rights. The EMHRN wish to consolidate and develop this process and plans to

- Hold two regional working group meetings per year with the aim of:
 - Exchanging information about participants' work and increasing mutual knowledge thereof
 - Conducting training about the EU and developing human rights response to these policies including monitoring the follow-up to the EuroMed Ministerial meeting on migration
 - Identifying joint projects between the participants
 - Monitoring research and publication of reports
- Organising sub regional meetings in order to strengthen sub regional networking
- Implementing a regional Migration and Asylum Alert mission mechanism regarding emblematic cases of violations of migrants and asylum seekers rights

- Drafting and publishing country fact sheets and publishing newsletters on migration and refugees
- Maintaining an EMHRN antenna in Morocco to deal with refugee and migration issues in the EuroMed region

3.2.3 Economic and social rights

Objectives

The **human rights framework** of the activity is the full implementation of international human rights standards pertaining to economic and social rights.

The **general objective** is the setting-up of civil society instruments and mechanisms to monitor the impact of the free trade zone and the MEDA programmes on human rights in the EuroMed region.

The **short term objective** is to initiate a process of training NGOs on action based approaches to economic and social rights in the region

Background

Human rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. For historical reasons, human rights organisations in the EuroMed region have paid more attention to civil and political rights than to economic and social rights. However, social and economic inequalities between and within countries of the region are blatant. During the coming decade the establishment of the Free Trade Zone will have a major impact on the social and economic conditions of people in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries. It risks – at least in the short term - harming people's economic and social rights (the right to work, to housing, to education, to health, etc.) and, by extension, people's ability to exercise their political and civil rights. In this sense it is important to develop instruments to monitor economic and social developments from a human rights perspective both at international, regional and local level.

Activities

The EMHRN has conducted several activities within the field of economic and social rights. Lately it cooperated with the Comisiones Obrerós and the EuroMed Trade Union Forum on a project on Employment and the Right to Work in the EuroMed Region. The EMHRN will explore the possibility of establishing a Working group on economic and social rights and look into ways of mainstreaming economic and social rights concerns into the dealings of the other Working groups. In addition, the EMHRN will explore possibility of producing a practical resource on economic and social rights that could be used by NGOs in the region to take concrete steps to secure better economic and social rights enforcement in the region. The resource would include a legal base in order to promote the justiciability of economic and social rights and also have a focus on broader advocacy and campaigning techniques.

4. Communication

Objectives

The **human rights framework** of this activity is to create efficient, comprehensive and transparent tools to disseminate the human rights objective and values of the EMHRN and its members both internally and externally

The **general objective** is to efficiently voice and communicate information about the activities and concerns of the EMHRN and its members within the membership and to relevant media, decision makers and civil society groups, and to communicate information to the membership about human rights developments relating to their work

The **short term objective** is to;

- Develop the necessary resources to fulfil the general objectives
- This includes developing the web site as reflecting the work of members and the main human rights issues in the region, the EMP and ENP

Background

EMHRN Networking is dependent on efficient and relevant modes of communication between members as well as between the Network, civil society, media and decision makers in the EuroMed region. All General Assemblies of the EMHRN have underlined the need to strengthen the EMHRN's internal and external communication in order to increase transparency and members' participation in EMHRN work as well as awareness in the media about the work of the EMHRN. It has also underlined the importance of voicing the EMHRN's position with regard to current human rights developments.

Activities

The EMHRN will:

- Maintain a full time position of the communication officer in Copenhagen in charge of the EMHRN's internal and external communication to full time.
- Employ a communication officer in Cairo responsible for relations with the Arab media and the Arab pages of the EMHRN's web site
- Seek to identify resources for employing a media officer in Brussels
- On the executive level, strengthen its work in terms of monitoring, reacting and communicating to the outside world about civil society concerns related to the human rights situation in the region.
- Issue news briefings and newsletters with information from members and about the latest human rights developments in the EuroMed region, the EU, etc.
- Proactively contact members in order to exchange information and increasingly target specific news to specific needs
- Develop and maintain its new web site and build-up additional thematic modules

5. Membership support

5.1. Solidarity

Objectives

The **human rights framework** is the respect by state and non-state actors of the principles of the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (UN 9 December 1998))

The **general objective** is to

- ensure that EMHRN members experience that the Network constitutes a protection mechanism for them
- make use of available human rights protection instruments when EMHRN members partners are at risk

The **short term objective** is to identify and implement modes to do systematic solidarity work when EMHRN members or their work are at risk

Background

The EMHRN is convinced that solidarity plays a major role for protecting human rights defenders and for promoting networking, cooperation and internal cohesion. Since it was established, the EMHRN worked to strengthen bonds of solidarity between its members. Amongst other it established the EuroMed Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders which is now hosted by the Network.

The EMHRN believes that human rights defenders and organisations joining the Network should feel protected by the membership through acts of solidarity when they or their work are at risk. The EMHRN is in particular concerned with the situation in Algeria, Syria and Tunisia where civil society (for a number of reasons) is amongst the the weakest and/or under greatest pressure.

Activities

In this respect the EMHRN will:

- Employ a full time coordinator to deal with solidarity actions – in particular in relation to Algeria, Syria and Tunisia, including organising regular missions as well as meetings with human rights defenders
- Allocate time for each coordinator in the staff to deal with urgent interventions within his/her remit and activate the working groups in this regard
- Draft a concept paper on its policy and practice as regards solidarity work and urgent action
- On the executive level, strengthen its work regarding monitoring and responding to changes of the human rights situation in the region
- Maintain close cooperation with the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

5.2. Training

Objectives

The **human rights framework** of the activity is to create human rights training tools adapted to the context in the Euro-Mediterranean region where these do not exist aimed at strengthening human rights activists capacity to deliver human rights work within a EuroMed context.

The **general objective** is to create synergies between different training and capacity building efforts within the Network and fill-in gaps where these exist

The **short term objective** is to set up a first series of training courses while visualising the training activities of the members

Background

The EMHRN conducted several training courses for its members, most recently on the European Neighbourhood Policy and Gender Mainstreaming. Training focuses on human rights issues that are relevant for the region and not covered elsewhere. Many EMHRN members are also engaged in training activities.

Activities

The EMHRN will

- Establish an overview over planned training and capacity building activities within the membership and see where there are obvious synergies to be established
- Implement training and advocacy activities on the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) (see below, point 6)
- Conduct training course with member organisations on gender mainstreaming (see above, point 3.1.3)
- Look into possibility of developing a practical resource on economic and social rights in a EuroMed context (see above)

6. Advocacy and dialogue

Objectives

The **human rights framework** is the EU, ENP and Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean Process (BP:UMP) instruments pertaining to international human rights standards in the EuroMed region

The **general objective** is to efficiently communicate EMHRN and members' policies and recommendations to the relevant representatives of the EU, ENP and BP:UMP and ensure feed-back from and dialogue with these on human rights. It is also to ensure that EMHRN members are aware of these and can benefit from this knowledge in their human rights work.

*The **short term objective** is to further develop EMHRN advocacy activities in relation to the EU, ENP and BP:UMP and its function as an interface between EMHRN members and the said institutions.*

Background

When working within the context of EU, ENP and BP: UMP policies, it is important to feed the outcome of the EMHRN's and its members' activities into these mechanisms as a means to promote human rights protection on the ground

Dialogue and advocacy are important methods for promoting human rights. The EMHRN directs critical attention towards the mechanisms of the BP: UMP, the ENP, and the EU. The EMHRN gives particular attention to bi-lateral relations (between the EU and individual Partner States) as these are currently more conducive to change than multi-lateral relations. The EMHRN has produced a guide to human rights in the Barcelona process , the ENP and the EU and successfully conducted training courses and public meetings on these entities in Egypt, Lebanon, Israel and in Morocco. In this connection the EMHRN members in several countries have expressed a growing interest in and critical approach to the role played by the EU and the (lack of) implementation of existing human rights mechanisms.

Activities

The EMHRN will

- Maintain an interface between the EU, ENP, and BP:UUMP and its members through its office in Brussels, including organising visits of members to Brussels; continuing promoting its general policies and recommendations vis-à-vis the BP: UMP, the EU and partner governments; disseminate reports and policy papers produced by its working groups and mission teams while promoting their recommendations; diffusing information on the Web and in news letters about key issues of the human rights dimension of the EMP.
- Conduct training courses in the region on the human rights instruments in the EU, ENP and BP: UMP aimed at strengthening civil society capacity to deal critically with EU, BP:UMP and ENP human rights instruments and South Mediterranean countries' human rights policies. Update training materials in this regard.
- Expand its advocacy and lobby activities in relation to the human rights instruments of the ENP, including drafting monitoring reports and statements, and in this regard establish a full time coordinator position to deal with the ENP. (see Annex 1 for a detailed description of activities in this field)
- Continue close cooperation with other Brussels based NGOs

7. Partnerships

Objectives

*The **human rights framework** of this activity is to encourage broad alliances of civil society groups from different constituencies and with different mandates to work together on the basis of adherence to international human rights standards.*

*The **general objective** is to contribute to developing and supporting efficient networks of civil society groups rooted in human rights values that can impact positively on the situation in the EuroMed region.*

*The **short term objective** is to actively maintain and develop partnerships within and beyond the human rights community working in the region.*

Background

The EMHRN believes it is important to cooperate with civil society beyond the human rights community in the region, as well as with international NGOs, and in this way build partnerships and disseminate the values upon which it builds its work. In the past the EMHRN has actively cooperated with a number of partners and

has proactively initiated or supported the establishment of new networks and entities such as the EuroMed Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF), the EuroMed NGO Platform and the Danish NGO network under the Arab Initiative.

It has initiated cooperation with EMHRN members in Morocco and the Moroccan Consultative Council on Human Rights in order to provide technical assistance to the drafting of a National Human Rights and Democracy Plan.

The EMHRN has sought broad alliance with - and outreach to - international and other non governmental organisations, trade unions, environmental and development groups, as well as religious groups, inside and outside the region.

Activities

The EMHRN will:

- Continue to support and host the EMHRF
- Support the EuroMed NGO Platform to become an efficient clearing house for EuroMed civil society networks
- Continue support to the drafting of a National Human Rights Plan in Morocco
- Maintain and strengthen relations with international human rights organisations Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the FIDH, OMCT, etc.
- Continue developing partnerships with trade unions, private and political foundations, and religious based organisations
- Develop relations to other forums for dialogue on human rights values and standards, such as social forums and political platforms

8. Executive Bodies and memberships

Objectives

*The **human rights framework** is to ensure the necessary means, resources and capacity for the executive bodies to implement the objectives of the EMHRN and reflect the values upon which the Network is built.*

*The **general objective** is to*

- *Implement the statutes and by-laws of the EMHRN in a transparent and democratic way, and ensure the participation of members in delivering the EMHRN's agenda*
- *Ensure gender-mainstreaming of the EMHRN*
- *Ensure that the EMHRN membership and strategy reflect one another*

*The **short term objective** is to*

- *Support and the work of EMHRN executive bodies*
- *Further develop internal communication practices to ensure transparency and ownership to decision making*
- *Develop a gender mainstreaming policy*

Activities

- Hold a General Assembly of the EMHRN in 2008 with a main focus on recent trends that impact on human rights as well as how to respond to these
- Hold three annual Executive Committee meetings
- Hold three annual steering group meetings aimed at supervising the daily management of the secretariat and assisting the President in his/her role as a working President

- Hold an annual meeting of conveners, political referents and coordinators of EMHRN working groups
- Finalise and set up a gender audit of the EMHRN and develop a gender mainstreaming policy on that basis
- Update the statutes in order to match the development of the EMHRN
- Define a proactive approach to new memberships

9. Administration

Objectives

The **human rights framework** of this activity is to build an efficient and resourceful administration enabling the EMHRN to fully implement its objectives, mission and vision.

The **general objective** is to provide administrative support to all areas of the EMHRN's work enabling the network to fully implement its strategy

The **short term objective** is to set up the necessary structures to implement the work programme of the EMHRN and to strengthen its capacity to respond proactively to changing circumstances in the region

Background

The EMHRN aims to support its activities with a committed, efficient and professional administration which is sensitive to intercultural dialogue, to the members' needs and to the environment in which they work.

Activities

The EMHRN will work to

- Consolidate its organisational structure, developing its administrative and financial procedures and hire the necessary administrative staff to match the EMHRN's development and in transparent way
- Ensure long term and diversified funding for the EMHRN and develop a strategy in this regard
- Consolidate three EMHRN antennas in the South (Amman, Cairo and Rabat) as well as the office in Brussels
- Implement a staff development plan