



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

EMHRN Executive Committee meeting

Paris, 14-16 June 2013

Minutes – *Approved*

The EMHRN Executive Committee meeting took place in Paris on 14-16 June 2013. The meeting was preceded by a meeting with the new EMHRN member in France, Ligue de l'Enseignement, on June 14 2013. The EMHRN also used the opportunity of being in Paris to meet with its member organizations, i.e. Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes, Ligue de l'Enseignement and LDH, to discuss the issue of the current human rights debates in France in the EuroMed context.

PARTICIPANTS

Executive Committee (EC) of the EMHRN:

Michel Tubiana (President), Nasser Dutour (Vice president), Moataz El Feghery (Treasurer), Alya Chérif Chamhari, Anitta Kynsilehto, Ayachi Hammami, Eugenia Papamakariou, Raffaella Bolini, Søs Nissen and Osman Isci (EC members).

Secretariat:

Marc Schade-Poulsen (Executive Director), Alexandre Baron (Fundraising and Contract officer, on June 14-16), Hayet Zeghiche (Communication director, on June 15-16), Mathieu Routier (Project coordinator, on June 14 and 16), Marta Semplici (Project coordinator, on June 14-16), Bérénice Michard (Project coordinator, on June 14-15), and Maibritt Nielsen (Executive Secretary, rapporteur).

Other participants:

Francoise Brié (Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes), David Lopez (Ligue de l'Enseignement), Pierre Tartakowsky, Jacques Montacié, Catherine Teule, Nicole Savy, and Maryse Artiguelong (LDH).

Absent with notification:

Isaías Barreñada and Mahmoud AbuRahma (EC members) – see under point 1

AGENDA

1. Welcome - Approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the EC meeting on 15-17 February 2013
2. Round on the recent political developments in the region
3. Meeting with member organisations on the current human rights debates in France in the EuroMed context
4. The current situation in Turkey
5. Report from the Secretariat
6. Financial report from the Secretariat
7. Fundraising
8. Freedom of Assembly
9. Communication
10. Update on the EMHRN's restructuring process, including decision on the Mashrek office
11. Algeria
12. Membership applications and membership criteria, as well as the issue of staff members as honorary members and the CNLT's membership
13. Syria
14. Venue for EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013



1. Welcome - Approval of the agenda and approval of the minutes from the EC meeting on 15-17 February 2013

Michel Tubiana welcomed the EC to Paris for their second EC meeting this year. He informed that Mahmoud AbuRahma had been prevented from attending the meeting as he had not been granted the visa for France.

Decisions:

- The EC approved the agenda of the meeting
- The EC approved the minutes from the last Executive Committee meeting on 15-17 February 2013 without any comments

Documents:

1.1 Agenda (*for approval*)

1.2 Minutes from the EC meeting on 15-17 February 2013 (*for approval*)

1.3 Minutes from the Quartet meeting on 22 April 2013 (*for information*)

2. Round on the recent political developments in the region

Moderator: Alya Cherif Chamhari

Alya Cherif Chamhari made an introduction to the round on the recent political developments in the region, highlighting that the political situation in the region is reaching serious dimensions as the armed groups are getting more powerful due to the absence of a centralised and strong state which leads to insecurity among the populations. Democratic systems are not put into place; on the contrary anti-democratic laws and practices prevail in the region. At the same time, the EU is not making any real pressure to push human rights and democracy forward.

Following the introduction to the situation in the region, Michel Tubiana informed of the French government's efforts to revive the Union for the Mediterranean which took place during a meeting attended by high officials in Malaga on 9-10 June 2013. During the meeting, the EMHRN wished to attend the sessions where the first draft was discussed, however the Arab countries blocked the Network's participation in these sessions and the EMHRN thus participated in the meeting on the European countries only. The first draft included references to burning issues, including freedom of association and women's rights, and the creation of an independent observatory that will issue reports on the developments in the region. The meeting in Malaga will be followed by a ministerial meeting on women's rights in September 2013 that should also be attended by the EMHRN. Civil society will be invited for the ministerial meeting but it remains unclear to which extent they will have a role and a real saying during the meeting.

The EC members then had a round on the recent developments in their respective countries and in the region highlighting;

- The alarming situation in Syria where the regime has possibly used chemical weapons against the opposition
- The recruitment of young men in Tunisia for the fight against the regime in Syria, and the persuasion of young girls in Tunisia into temporary marriages in Syria, being prostitution in disguise.
- The reference to Islam as a state religion in Tunisia which is alarming - and civil society's protests against it
- The organized crime in Egypt and Tunisia after the Arab Spring, that includes the killing of soldiers in Egypt without any investigation
- The mobilization of Egyptian jihadists to participate in the Syrian conflict
- The many accusations of blasphemy in Egypt leading to prison sentences which puts pressure on journalists and the citizens
- The demonstration taking place in Egypt on 30 June 2013 that might lead to violence
- The violation of human, democratic and social rights in Greece, and the kidnaping of a Turkish human rights activist, possibly by the secret services, who was later found in a prison in Istanbul
- The possible reawakening of civil society due to the demonstrations in Turkey
- The Arab Spring that has possibly turned into an Arab Winter, and the need to show solidarity in a difficult period of time

- The inward looking attitude of the Italians who avoid taking a stand on the outside world, despite the fact that Italy is one of the countries with the biggest peace movements
- The 1,5 million refugees in Lebanon
- The unspoken war between Iran and the Gulf countries
- The lack of hope that revolutions will result in democracy as elections have helped the extremists to come to power and take measures against democracy
- The ecosoc crisis in Europe that might lead to the increase of right wing movements
- The EU's support of 20 million Euros to Algeria, implying that the EU might not have learnt from past experiences with Muammar Gaddafi and Hosni Mubarak
- The absence and weakness of the EU in the region, not being able to push the human rights agenda forward and endorse a specific strategy dealing with the security vacuum in the region

Following the round on the developments in the region, Marc Schade-Poulsen asked Moataz El Fegierly about the role of the army in relation to the demonstrations in Egypt. Marc Schade-Poulsen furthermore said that it was worthwhile noting that there is a lot of resistance of civil society in the region, and the EMHRN should see how civil society actors can strategize their efforts. Moataz El Fegierly answered by saying that the military would not let Egypt fall and it is waiting to see how the demonstrations in the streets develop.

In relation to Syria, Marc Schade-Poulsen suggested to make an evaluation of how the country ended up with the current conflict, and to consider how the EMHRN can react and work as a network in conflict situations. Moataz El Fegierly said that in the case of Syria, a political solution is better than an international intervention as a military escalation would benefit the jihadist movements, however it seems impossible to reach consensus in Syria. He suggested to analyse the new regional dynamics and the role of the new actors, as well as to revisit the regional advocacy in the Arab world, the reason being that the conflicts in the region are interlinked.

Mathieu Routier noted that the strongest organisations in Syria are not against a military intervention. At the moment, the balance of power is tending towards the regime, and the opposition coalition remains very weak. All the parties involved in the conflict are however committing violations and an international investigation commission issued a report recently, mentioning the issue of victims and the fight against impunity. As for the regional dynamics, he listed that a delegation went to Syria to look for the young Tunisians sent to Syria in order to bring them back; that Algeria is showing solidarity towards the refugees from Syria; and that Palestinians still consider Syria as the only country that can oppose the Israeli occupation; whereas the Lebanese state is very weak and looks at the situation in the region according to the balance of power in Lebanon.

Marta Semplici suggested having a reflection on how the EMHRN can show solidarity to its members as a regional network. At the same time, it is difficult to understand the situation and know who the actors are in Syria, in particular as there are attempts to divide civil society. There are democratic setbacks everywhere, Marta Semplici said, and Algeria serves as an example of a corrupt regime that is even financed by the EU, and where there is a fear to see the bloody history repeated.

Bérénice Michard said that all the new dynamics in the region have an influence on freedom of assembly and expression. She mentioned Turkey as an example of a country with a democratic elected regime that has become undemocratic when exercising its power. She finally noted that the issue of solidarity with civil society in the South deserves an in-depth analysis in order to have a strong solidarity approach and measures in the region.

3. Meeting with member organisations on the current human rights debates in France in the EuroMed context

Moderator: Moataz El Fegierly

Moataz El Fegierly welcomed the representatives from the EMHRN's member organisations in Paris, i.e. the Fédération Nationale Solidarité Femmes, Ligue de l'Enseignement, and LDH, for a discussion of the current human rights debates in France in the EuroMed context.

Michel Tubiana informed that LDH had recently organized a conference on France's role in European politics. He noted that human rights should be considered in a broader perspective as the national and European legislations are interlinked. He added that, when analysing the relation between France, the EU

and the South Mediterranean countries, the history should be taken into consideration, in particular France's previous role as a colonialist power. Today, the French population still refers to migrants of first, second, third and even fourth generation in a condescending way which is a reaction against the Arab Muslim world. Finally, he mentioned that the Union for the Mediterranean, originally initiated by Nicolas Sarkozy, had been relaunched.

Alya Cherif Chammari said there should be new solidarity actions and initiatives to help civil society to continue their struggle. She added that Francois Hollande would visit Tunisia on 4-5 July 2013. It was her feeling that there is a reverting back to old positions in France, and that there is no pressure by France or Europe as such on the Tunisian regime to push forward a democratic agenda. Instead there are set backs in terms of human rights and women's rights and a feeling of insecurity due to the armed groups.

Moataz El Fegiery said that the tensions in the South have increased, and there is a raise of the Islamist parties in the South at the expense of women's rights, freedom of religion and expression. In Europe, some Muslims have set up their own parallel legal system, applying Sharia laws instead of civil law. At the Malaga meeting on 9-10 June 2013, there was also resistance from the governments in the South to promote international standards on women's rights. He asked how the NGOs could work together to protect human rights and ensure that the EU is firm in defending human rights.

Michel Tubiana said that the debate on the issue of the veil had been exported from the South to the North. The winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Tawakkol Karman, who represents a women's rights organization, has participated in the debate on the veil, saying that she did not understand why European countries would want to prevent the veil, the European institutions being secular. At the same time religious factors are recognized in the South. There is an agreement on the universal values, however everybody has to choose the path s/he will take to reach these values, and the norms of the West should not be exported to the South.

Rafaella Bolini said that many politicians do not feel obliged to put the universal rights into practice. The situation between the North and South is different, and even among the countries in the North and the South respectively, however the North and the South have the issue of religion and politics in common, including the issue of free elections that may be a danger for democracy. She stressed the importance of strengthening civil society in order for it to have influence on the political sphere.

Alya Cherif Chammari said that the EMHRN should work on the universal principles but at the same time accept that the path leading to the universal principles can vary from one region to another. She asked how civil society could convince the governments in the North and the South that there are many ways of reaching the universality of rights.

David Lopez said that the EMHRN could intervene at different levels as a Network and have immediate reactions as well as long term actions and objectives on issues as for instance democracy education. Nicole Savy suggested having a dialogue with European human rights organisations instead of national human rights organisations, France being a member of the EU.

Pierre Tartakowsky said that the NGOs live in societies that are afraid and aggressive towards one another which is linked to the economic and social crisis that affects the image that people have of each other, and the relation between people. Therefore it is important to talk about universal rights and take into consideration the crisis in both the North and the South. The EMHRN is one of the unique spaces for this kind of debate and the Network has the possibility of being heard given its many years of experience, Pierre Tartakowsky said.

4. The current situation in Turkey

Moderator: Osman Isci

Osman Isci started the session on Turkey by expressing his and his family's gratitude to the EC members for their solidarity with him while he was in detention in Ankara. This solidarity campaign made him stronger and at the same time, it sent a strong message to those who were responsible for his unjust detention, he said. Michel Tubiana said that the EC members were happy to have Osman Isci among them again. He said that the EC members wanted to show their solidarity with him and at the same time send a signal to the Turkish authorities that the charges against him were not justified.

As for the current situation in Turkey, Osman Isci informed that the demonstrations at the Taksim Square in Istanbul started 18 days prior to the EC meeting. During the last 11 years that the government has been in place, it has discriminated some parts of the country in terms of religious origin etc., and the demonstrations are thus not only rooted in the population's discontent with the planned construction of a shopping centre in the Gezi Park near the Taksim Square. There are thus many theories for the motivation behind the demonstrations in Turkey, one of them being that the government had not consulted the national groups in relation to the Kurdish negotiation process. As a result of the demonstrations, 7517 persons have been detained, 2500 persons injured, and four persons lost their life. The persons in detention include five foreign citizens, among these an intern at the IHD office in Istanbul who is being charged with the same anti-terror law as Osman Isci. This kind of pressure on the population will continue until there is a change of the security policy, Osman Isci noted. In order to change the mentality regarding the security, the NGOs should target not only the high ranked officials but also the lower ranked ones who work on the ground.

The IHD's main focus is on the rights of the demonstrators – not their profile – meaning that if there are violations of freedom of assembly or association, the IHD takes a stand which they have done in this case. Osman Isci was of the opinion that Europe should change its perspective to a right based perspective. Osman Isci added that Bérénice Michard had suggested sending an EMHRN mission to Turkey. He suggested the EMHRN to send a mission to Turkey when the demonstrations had ended in order to make a deeper analysis of the factors behind the demonstrations, possibly in combination with the second hearing of Osman Isci's case on 8 July 2013.

Osman Isci also informed that the IHD is organising an international fact finding mission in late July/ early August 2013 regarding the PKK's withdrawal process, and he invited the EMHRN to take part in the mission (FIDH already confirmed its participation). The mission will target the authorities and NGOs and spend two days in the region and Ankara respectively. A committee will observe the withdrawal process and focus on the government practices in relation to the process. A report has also been issued in Turkish on the peace negotiations, and Osman Isci volunteered to translate it into English and send it to the EC. Finally, regarding the Constitution, it has been an issue since 2009, Osman Isci said, and the Parliament might not succeed in drafting a new one, having been able to obtain consensus on 52 articles only. The new Constitution should be based on human rights perspectives and meet the Copenhagen Criteria.

Following Osman Isci's presentation of the current situation in Turkey, Michel Tubiana said that the democratic movement in the streets was able to be created because of the current peace negotiations with the PKK. He asked whether it would be useful to send a fact finding mission to Istanbul to look into the factors behind the demonstrations. Secondly, he noted that the IHD could use the experience from the disarmament process of the IRA in Ireland and the ETA in the Basque country. The EMHRN supports any initiative in this regard, and the Network would thus like to take part in the fact finding mission in Turkey and the work around the peace negotiations with the PKK, Michel Tubiana said.

Osman Isci agreed that the fact finding mission should benefit from previous experiences with armed conflicts, and he had already visited the Irish Ambassador for the same reason. In addition, there is a group composed by four MPs who will visit countries with similar experiences, i.e. United Kingdom, Scotland, Wales, South African and France, and nine persons in each of the seven regions in Turkey will go to the different regions to explain the process and measures to be taken in relation to the process as well as to collect information for a report to be presented to the government.

Alya Cherif Chamhari asked whether there was any coordination of the demonstrations that currently take place at the Taksim Square. Osman Isci answered that the demonstrators are disorganized and mainly young people who are deprived of their rights and who have economic problems. Finally, Marc Schade-Poulsen asked Osman Isci whether the AKP is the new defender of the deep state. Osman Isci answered that any party that has been in power for 11 years creates its own deep state with no rule of law, although elected at democratic elections.

Decision:

- The EMHRN will see how things evolve in Turkey before sending a mission to Turkey
- The EMHRN to take part in mission to the Kurdish area

5. Report from the Secretariat

Moderator: Osman Isci

Marc Schade-Poulsen presented the report from the Secretariat (see 5.1 News Exchange summary no. 66-67 and 5.2 News Exchange no. 68) and invited the political referents to comment on the activities of the different Working groups (*activities are only mentioned below when they are not already included in the 5.1 News Exchange summary no. 66-67 and 5.2 News Exchange no. 68*).

Justice

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that the Working group had been established during its meeting on 31 May to 2 June 2013 in Tunis. The exact work program for the Working group is not yet in place; however the issue of trial monitoring used in assessing transitional justice has been suggested for future work.

Freedom of Association

In relation to Osman Isci's case, Marc Schade-Poulsen mentioned that he had met with Michael Miller from the EU delegation in Turkey who is willing to help the EMHRN whenever he can. Marc Schade-Poulsen had also met human rights officials from several missions, and the Irish and French embassies. There is now a network for the protection of human rights defenders that follows cases in Turkey, and this network will be informed when contacting the EU delegation,.

Migrants and asylum seekers

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that 3-4 participants had been prevented from participating in the Working group meeting in Oxford on 17-19 May 2013, and that the Algerian participants had not been granted the visa for the meeting. He suggested contacting the authorities to avoid similar problems in the future. He finally noted that it was a promising perspective for the Working group to bring participants together from closed borders.

Anitta Kynsilehto mentioned that there would be a regional conference with the UNHCR national offices in the North African countries in October 2013, possibly in Cairo, to discuss the diversity of practices in the different countries. She furthermore mentioned that the EU asylum support office opened two years ago in Malta, and that the Working group would look into its working practices, possibly by seeking to become part of its consultative forum

Women's rights and gender mainstreaming

Alya Cherif Chammari informed that a report on the discrimination and violence of Palestinian women in occupied territories would be finalized by the end of September 2013. In addition, there would be a report on four European countries that are having a financial crisis as the crisis has an impact on the situation of women. She added that during the Malaga meeting on 9-10 June 2013, the position of the Arab countries towards women's rights had remained negative which confirms that the process is very relevant. Finally, she informed that the EMHRN and the EuroMed NGO Platform will organize a civil forum prior to the ministerial meeting. The civil forum will see the participation of approx. 60 NGOs.

EcoSoc

The EMHRN's focus in relation to EcoSoc should be discussed at the next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013 as Isaías Barreñada was not present at this meeting, however the EMHRN is in the process of identifying funds for EcoSoc, Marc Schade-Poulsen informed. He noted that the EU delegation in Tunisia had asked the EMHRN to raise the Tunisian civil society's awareness of the EU-Tunisian relations. In this project, the EMHRN could possibly include some studies on economic relations between Tunisia and the EU and their impact on EcoSoc in the region. He finally added that the EMHRN had suggested Oxfam to organise a work shop on economic and social relations between the EU and the South Mediterranean Partner Countries (SMPC).

Algeria – visa campaign

Michel Tubiana informed that the EMHRN, Amnesty International and FIDH had launched a campaign on the problem of getting visas for Algeria. The three organisations would inform the Algerian authorities that a delegation would go to Algeria.

Advocacy

Marc Schade-Poulsen pointed out the good cooperation between the EMHRN members in Egypt and the EMHRN office in Brussels, which had pushed the EU to be more proactive on the issue of the draft

association law in Egypt. He noted that the stronger the members are on the ground, the better results the EMHRN obtain.

Amnesty and Human Rights Watch

Marc Schade-Poulsen asked for the EC's feedback to the format and content of the meetings with Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that might be broadened to other organisations as well. Michel Tubiana thought that the EC should wait and see how things will evolve with the two organisations before taking any decisions.

FIDH

Michel Tubiana briefed the EC about the FIDH's congress in Istanbul on 23-24 May 2013 that no general political resolution was adopted during the congress, only country resolutions. Karim Lahidji was elected as the new President of the FIDH although he got the same number of votes as the other candidate, as in these cases the oldest candidate becomes President according to the internal regulations.

Documents:

5.1 News Exchange summary (no. 66-67) (*for information*)

5.2 News Exchange no. 68 (*for information*)

5.3 Work plan 2013 (*for information*)

6. Financial report from the Secretariat

Moderator: Anitta Kynsilehto

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed the EC that the EMHRN had closed the financial year 2012 by the end of February 2013. The Annual report 2012 had unfortunately not been finalized for the EC meeting but the EC would receive the report by email following the meeting, and the report would be presented at the next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013. Marc Schade-Poulsen furthermore noted that the budget for the coming years look good, also due to the fact that, from now on, SIDA and DANIDA will give three year contracts (so far the EMHRN only had two year contracts) to the EMHRN. Finally, Marc Schade-Poulsen mentioned that the Head of Administration, Poul Collemorten, had resigned and would leave the EMHRN by the end of June 2013, the reason being that he would like to find a more challenging job.

Documents:

6.1 Budget and results for 2013 activities (*for approval*)

6.2 Budget 2013 (*for information*)

7. Fundraising

Moderator: Ayachi Hammami

Alexandre Baron presented the *7.1 Fundraising update*, adding that the Church of Sweden that has funded the PIP project so far might become a core funder in the future. Michel Tubiana asked for more information about the project on the fight against discrimination (page 1), and Marc Schade-Poulsen said that the project would be based on the conclusions from the EC meeting on 15-17 February 2013, and that the EC would be consulted on this topic.

Alexandre Baron then presented the *7.2 Outline for a Fundraising strategy document* that is the outline for the future fundraising strategy that would be presented with a timeline for the coming years at the EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013. He asked for the EC's advice as to the guiding principles (page 2-3), namely the kind of funding, the kind of donors, the level of independence from the donors as well as the diversification of donors. He also noted that there should be a systematic approach in the Program department in relation to fundraising and reporting to the donors of the different projects.

Following the presentations, Michel Tubiana said that the financial issue is at the same time a political issue. He noted that the EMHRN should avoid being too dependent on two donors only and instead try to explore private donors. He said that there are two preoccupations in relation to fundraising, i.e. to ensure that the Network stays independent of its donors, and that the Network does not grow too fast. He suggested finding the means to build partnerships with the EMHRN members who count a lot of experts and who can organise trainings etc. on the ground, possibly with financial means allocated by the EMHRN. The challenge would be

to manage the partnerships in practical terms. He added that the EMHRN should find funds for three projects, i.e. the justice Working group, human rights education, and ecosoc. Finally, he noted that the French national human rights commission gives a financial award every year, and he asked whether the EC would agree to present the EMHRN's candidacy for this award.

Marc Schade-Poulsen asked the EC to take a political decision as to how the EMHRN should react in case a donor with a bad reputation would wish to support the EMHRN financially. Søs Nissen warned the EMHRN about accepting any conditions from donors, and she agreed that the Project coordinators should also be involved in fundraising and reporting to the donors.

Moataz El Fegjery was also in favour of diversifying funding in order not to get too dependent on DANIDA, SIDA and the EU. He suggested exploring whether the EMHRN can have strategic partnerships with private donors outside Europe, being more sustainable, although it would take time to build partnerships with them. The Network should however make sure to include local partners as much as possible, also to avoid competition between local and international organisations. Rafaella Bolini agreed with Moataz El Fegjery that the EMHRN should not compete with its members in relation to funding. If the EMHRN improves its cooperation with its members, it would be a way to avoid conflicts; however the partnerships should also see the active participation of its members. Alexandre Baron noted that the suggestion of partnership with members would go hand in hand with the EU's new requirement of subgranting.

In relation to private funding, Osman Isci noted that private donors' positions are more likely to change. He suggested having a black list of donors that the EMHRN would not accept at any time, as well as a list with possible donors provided that the EMHRN conditions are met, possibly drafted by an expert on the issue of donors. This would allow the EC to judge whether the EMHRN should accept funds from the donors in question. Rafaella Bolini noted that it differs how the organisations look upon different donors and their activities, and that a list of possible donors could be envisaged.

Michel Tubiana concluded that there was an agreement on diversifying the funding. However, in relation to private donors, the EMHRN should have a case by case approach before accepting funds from a donor. Not in any case would the Network however accept funds from donors involved in oil, arms or exploiting natural resources. However, Søs Nissen thought that the EMHRN should accept that it is relying on core funding from major donors, and she suggested limiting its number of core funders to two or three. She did not think that the EMHRN should spend too much energy on getting funds from minor private donors as the EMHRN could not survive from their funds. Bérénice Michard also noted that the reporting to many minor donors is time consuming and at the expense of the project activities themselves.

Finally, Ayachi Hammami suggested organising solidarity events in terms of art and culture in the Arab countries, possibly in cooperation with the EMHRN's members, where the revenue from a certain event, for instance theatre or dinner with singer, could be handed in to the EMHRN.

Decisions:

- The EC agreed that the EMHRN should strive at diversifying its funding
- The EMHRN will have a case by case approach when considering new donors, however the Network will not accept donors involved in oil, arms, and natural resources at any time

Documents:

7.1 Fundraising update (*for information*)

7.2 Outline for a Fundraising strategy document (*for discussion*)

8. Freedom of Assembly

Moderator: Nassera Dutour

Bérénice Michard informed that the Working group on Freedom of Association had extended its mandate to include Freedom of Assembly which is a fundamental right linked to the issue of Freedom of Association. She noted that Freedom of assembly is the basis for social movements and a right that is under attack in many countries in the region. Civil society has developed during the Arab spring but is still controlled by the regimes.

Bérénice Michard then presented the EMHRN's project on Freedom of Assembly, highlighting in particular the Working group's work on;

- Networking and capacity building of organisations, including fact finding missions in the field
- Creating awareness by issuing news bulletins, press releases etc.
- Documentation work, including regional reports, that is the basis for lobbying actions towards the countries in question, the EU and the UN
- Solidarity, in particular Syria and Algeria but also in the case of Osman Isci in Turkey
- Regional report; one part on the legal framework in the countries in the region and the practice of the laws and their conformity with international standards; and a second part on three European countries, i.e. United Kingdom, France and Spain, and a comparison of these countries based on the same indicators.

Bérénice Michard asked the EC how the Working group should structure the follow up on its activities and build capacity among its members in a systematic way so their capacity to follow-up on different activities would be reinforced.

Following Bérénice Michard's presentation, Nassera Dutour asked how the reports of the Working group could be used in the best way. Søs Nissen also asked where the EMHRN and its members would have the best chances of using the reports and making joint national advocacy.

Moataz El Feghery suggested considering the problematic relation between Freedom of assembly and EcoSoc as the strikes are the only tool to demonstrate, however at the same time the governments complain that strikes slow down the economic situation. He also noted that it is a problem for states that are in a vacuum like Egypt that they cannot any longer secure security for its population and provide protection for the demonstrators.

Rafaella Bolini asked how the EMHRN could use its work in the political debates and for discussions with social movements and the European civil forum. She suggested sending the message that the EMHRN is in favour of dialogue and against the repression of the demonstrators on the Taksim Square in Istanbul. The EMHRN should also look into how the legislation has to improve in order to make it possible for the different populations to build up organisations, possibly investigating the obstacles for freedom of meetings in work places (factories, offices).

Michel Tubiana said that, in general, the Working group should not be concerned with issues related to trade unions. However, Osman Isci said that it is the trade unions that go to the streets and try to exercise the right to assembly. He thought that the EMHRN should concentrate on both Freedom of association and assembly, and see if these rights are put into practice in daily life. Michel Tubiana replied that the EMHRN should not replace or enter into competition with trade unions; the EMHRN can intervene when trade unions do not carry out their job – or in special cases as in Turkey. Osman Isci then suggested adding a note which explains why the EMHRN reports do not cover issues related to trade unions in order to prevent unjust criticisms from local organisations in the respective countries. Nassera Dutour finally asked how the Working group should deal with the issue of trade unions in relation to Algeria, and Michel Tubiana answered by saying that the trade union federation in Algeria is not doing its job and the EMHRN could therefore intervene in this case.

Rafaella Bolini reminded the EC that the campaign for Osman Isci had been a good framework for an alliance on an issue of common interest with the trade unions. The EMHRN should not replace the work of trade unions but think of them as potential alliances. Bérénice Michard agreed that the EMHRN should strive at increasing its alliances and that trade unions could be great alliances – the EMHRN had already worked with trade unions in both Algeria and Turkey.

Document:

8.1 Terms of references (*for information*)

9. Communication

Moderator: Søs Nissen

Marc Schade-Poulsen informed that, following the General Assembly on 1-3 June 2012, it had been decided to hire a consultant to analyse the EMHRN's communication. Following the consultant's report, the EMHRN had started the procedure to hire a Communication director, i.e. Hayet Zeghiche. She had been asked to prepare a detailed plan on how to implement the recommendations in the consultant's report. Michel Tubiana

added that during the Quartet meeting on 22 April 2013, Hayet Zeghiche had been asked to present practical measures for the restructuring of the communication of the EMHRN.

Hayet Zeghiche then presented the *9.2 Communication outline* and asked for the EC's political validation of the document in order to have the communication plan implemented by the next EMHRN General Assembly in 2015. She noted that the EMHRN is different from other organisations as the Network carries the voice of its members in the region, a fact that should be exploited according to her. As for the EMHRN identity (page 2), she suggested the EMHRN to get a slogan which would require a political decision. In relation to the SWOT analysis (page 3), Hayet Zeghiche suggested making greater use of the EC as public speakers than done so far; the EC could take turns and contribute each month with personal pieces (for example radio or TV interviews) that could be placed on the EMHRN web site or in the main stream media. Hayet Zeghiche then presented the practical steps in relation to the restructuring of the communication of the EMHRN (page 5-9) and the staff members who would implement it (page 10) as well as the timeline for it (page 10-11).

Following Hayet Zeghiche's presentation, Michel Tubiana noted that it was the first time that the EMHRN had a detailed communication plan. He asked Hayet Zeghiche for more information on the EMHRN's communication with its members, as well as the EC's internal communication that should be accompanied by training for the EC members in the project management system at the next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013. He furthermore asked her for a plan for the implementation, showing the different stages, for the next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013, including indicators every three months on the press' publication of EMHRN press releases. Michel Tubiana finally said that the EMHRN's press releases are often too long and should not contain more than five paragraphs. The EMHRN should not produce information but comment on information, he said.

Hayet Zeghiche answered Michel Tubiana saying that, when using the project management system, the EC members could log in and edit documents and at the same time see other EC members' edits, which would facilitate the editing of documents. She invited the EC members to decide on whether they would like this kind of system at their next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013 following the training. As for press releases, Hayet Zeghiche answered that she had distributed some guidelines to the Project coordinators on how to write press releases in order for these to have a specific style. She furthermore informed that she would make an assessment of the press' publication of the EMHRN press releases every three months and every year.

Anitta Kynsilehto noted that, in relation to Media relations and Media database (page 7), the context the EMHRN is working in should also be taken into consideration when deciding whether media events should be organised in relation to missions. As for the EC's internal communication, she was in favour of keeping the email consultation for press releases etc. Hayet Zeghiche answered Anitta Kynsilehto by saying that the idea was to let staff members from the Communication department accompany the delegations – not external journalists – in order to give more visibility to the delegations.

Søs Nissen thought that the presented communication plan was ambitious and she therefore suggested making a list of what would have the highest priority. She furthermore suggested including a summary in the EMHRN reports to ease the reading of the reports. Rafaella Bolini said that she would like to be reminded by email in case she should edit documents in the project management system. She noted that in some countries, for instance Italy, the EMHRN's press releases have to be translated before being launched.

Alya Cherif Chammari thought that the EC and Working group members receive many documents prior to their meetings. She was in favour of getting training on the project management system whereas Osman Isci suggested having a transition period for the project management system. Hayet Zeghiche answered by saying that the EC and Working group members would be able to find the documents in the Members Only Section so the previous documents would not have to be distributed again.

Marc Schade-Poulsen noted that, for political reasons, the question of the EMHRN's branding, including its name and logo, is important. Michel Tubiana asked the EC members whether they wanted to start the process of finding a new name and logo for the EMHRN to be discussed at the next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013. Ayachi Hammami asked whether the EC could change the EMHRN logo without the General Assembly's approval, which Michel Tubiana confirmed. Based on her experience from Dignity, Søs Nissen advised the EMHRN to use the ideas of the EMHRN members, colleagues etc. as a starting point for the new name and logo as it might be cheaper than hiring a company. She also advised the EMHRN to make sure to get a database that has a certain capacity, possibly Sharepoint, and to draw on other organisations' experience on this.

Decisions:

- The EC approved the *9.2 Communication outline*
- Hayet Zeghiche to prepare a plan for the implementation of the restructuring of the communication, showing the different stages, for the next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013, including indicators on the press' publication of EMHRN press releases
- Hayet Zeghiche to train the EC members in the project management system at the EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013
- The EC launched the process of finding a new name and logo for the EMHRN. The suggestions should be discussed at the EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013

Documents:

- 9.1 Consultancy report – Updated (*for information*)
- 9.2 Communication outline (*for discussion*)

10. Update on the EMHRN's restructuring process, including decision on the Mashrek office

Moderator: Eugenia Papamakariou

Without rapporteur

Decision:

- The EMHRN will establish the Mashrek office in Amman, Jordan, as a sub-regional office for a period of two years as Jordan is accessible for the EMHRN members

Documents:

- 10.1 Update on the EMHRN's restructuring process (*for information*)
- 10.2 Evaluation of where to establish a sub-regional office on the Mashrek (*for discussion*)

11. Algeria

Moderator: Raffaella Bolini

In relation to the EMHRN's project on Algeria, the Project coordinator first presented the political context in Algeria. She noted that the Algerian government had tried to control civil society to prevent a revolution as seen in some of the other countries in the region during the Arab spring. At the same time, the government has introduced some reforms, for instance the lifting of the state of emergency thanks to the pressure of civil society in Algeria, but also more restrictive laws as the law on associations.

It is foreseen to have presidential elections in Algeria in 2014, the Project coordinator said, however the current President, Abdul Aziz Bouteflika, is ill, and his illness might be used tactically by the Algerian government to freeze all reforms. At the same time, the threat of instability has been played as a card by the Algerian state to prevent any public movement towards more democracy, taking into consideration the bloody past of Algeria with victims of disappearances, civil war and impunity of terrorists.

The Project coordinator added that Algeria is a rich country due to its natural resources but the wealth is not equally shared by its population, and a lot of people are poor and unemployed, in particular in the South of Algeria. At the same time, the multinationals employ graduates from the North of Algeria and outside and give them a high salary which contributes to the imbalance of these employees and the rest of the population. A youth movement is claiming its right to employment and has mobilized thousands of young people in the South. The state has tried to absorb the youth movement by handing out money to people but without any attempt to create employment.

She noted that the National Human Rights Commission has become the only civil society interlocutor to issues pertaining to human rights. There is no dialogue between the NGOs and the Algerian authorities, and it is a huge challenge for the EMHRN to support the independent organisations that seem isolated, also taking into consideration the EMHRN's difficulties in getting the visa to enter Algeria. As for the EMHRN member, the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights (LADDH), it is currently in a serious internal crisis and the EMHRN might facilitate a meeting with all stakeholders to help the organization to get out of its crisis.

The Project coordinator furthermore said that the Working group tries to involve in particular the EMHRN's European members in its work as the Working group's work include many themes deemed relevant by the member organisations. The Working group also cooperates with the UN, Amnesty International, FIDH, Frontline, Human Rights Watch, independent trade unions in Europe, and Algerians based in France in order to set up a network of human rights defenders in support of human rights defenders in Algeria. In the framework of the EU, the EMHRN also tries to use the subcommittee of human rights in order to put pressure on Algeria.

Finally, she asked the EC what their vision of the country work is, in particular in relation to Algeria, and how this work could be strengthened and be beneficiary to other work. She furthermore asked how synergy between country work and regional work could be promoted, and how the EMHRN could enlarge its cooperation with its members in Algeria.

Michel Tubiana said that the situation in Algeria is very difficult, and that there is risk that things would suddenly explode in Algeria one day. Ayachi Hammami stressed the importance of investing funds and capacities in Algeria, a country where changes are expected and where civil society is weak and divided. Thanks to the EMHRN, some Algerian organisations work together, however there is a division within the LADDH that has a negative effect on the EMHRN's work and he therefore supported the idea of organising a reconciliation meeting between the stakeholders in order to help them. He finally suggested setting up a new women's rights organisation in Algeria, possibly with the participation of Algerians in Paris.

Alya Cherif Chammari said that the developments in Algeria will affect the whole region, and she thought that the EMHRN should find a way to support civil society in order for it to be able to promote fundamental freedoms in the country. She suggested exploring the difficulty of getting visas for Algeria in the framework of freedom of movement and travel bans for human rights defenders in the region. As for Ayachi Hammami's idea of setting up a women's rights organisation, Alya Cherif Chammari noted that there are already women's rights organizations in Algeria who do a great job and who could be invited for the Working group meetings.

Anitta Kynsilehto noted that there are important synergies between the project on Algeria and the project on migration. Anitta Kynsilehto asked whether the youth movement in the South of Algeria would enable the EMHRN to widening its work outside the main cities. The Project coordinator answered that the movement is very complex, and it was not foreseen to meet with the youth movement. Marc Schade-Poulsen said that the LADDH had already been divided in the 1990s and 5 years ago and that the new situation is challenging; the question is whether the EMHRN holds enough elements to be able to mediate between the different stakeholders. Another challenge is to mobilise European organisations around Algeria.

Nassera Dutour said that 10 years of civil war has divided and affected the society, persons being accused of working for the state etc. Even within the Working group, the members are having doubts about each other. She said that something had to be done to solve the issue of the LADDH to avoid more divisions from being created, and to solve the problems within the Working group. As for the women's rights groups in Algeria, some Solidarity group members think that these groups are in favour of the regime. She furthermore mentioned that the role of the Islamists should not be neglected, being very strong in Algeria. Finally, Alya Cherif Chammari noted that not all women's rights organisations in Algeria could be accused of being in favour of the regime.

12. Membership applications and membership criteria, as well as the issue of staff members as honorary members and the CNLT's membership

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

Membership criteria

Marc Schade-Poulsen mentioned that in the first part of the document *12.1 Regarding membership and exclusion of EMHRN members*, a number of proposals on how to handle membership applications had been listed, including the maximum number of four members per country, a ratio 40/60 60/40 North South, closer monitoring of members on a regular basis etc. It could be considered to include these proposals in the Statutes or By-laws. The second part was about the renewal of membership and how to expulse non active members, which is a sensitive issue, Marc Schade-Poulsen said. He had listed some criteria that could be used to justify the expulsion of members, i.e. non-existence of the organization, the non-participation in EMHRN activities, or the lack of respect of own statutes.

Michel Tubiana said that the criteria would be mentioned in the By-laws and not the Statutes to keep a certain margin of manoeuvre, and he suggested redrafting the By-laws accordingly for the next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013. He reminded the EC of his suggestion to have a conflict committee, composed by for example honorary members and previous EC members, that could be the arbitrator between the EC and the members and deal with internal conflicts and conflicts pertaining to the exclusion of members. The management of conflicts should be mentioned in the Statutes. Finally, he suggested discussing the issue of membership at each Quartet meeting. The EMHRN would thus be more proactive in relation to its member organisations, he said. As for the non-active members listed in *12.2 Note on EMHRN members whose membership might be reconsidered*, they would require a real investigation before the EC could take a decision on their membership.

Søs Nissen agreed with Michel Tubiana and noted at the same time, that a minimum activity level should also be required of the members of the different Working groups. She suggested thus to put an organisation's membership of a Working group on hold, or to expulse the organization from the Working group, if the organisation is not active, this in order to be able to invite other active organisations to take part in the Working group instead. She suggested including the issue of active participation in the Working groups as part of the revision of membership before the next General Assembly in 2015.

Decisions:

- Michel Tubiana will redraft the By-laws for the next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013, including Marc Schade-Poulsen's suggested criteria in relation to membership
- SNAPAP was adopted as a regular EMHRN member.

Documents:

- 12.1 Regarding membership and exclusion of EMHRN members (*for discussion*)
- 12.2 Note on EMHRN members whose membership might be reconsidered (*for discussion*)
- 12.3 Membership overview (*for information*)
- 12.4 Membership application overview (*for information*)
- 12.5 Pending applications (*for adoption*)

13. Syria

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

In relation to the EMHRN's project on Syria, the Project coordinator said that the EMHRN started working on supporting human rights defenders in Syria, Algeria and Tunisia, and building their capacity in 2009. Before the revolution in 2011, the EMHRN's work was focused on solidarity with a network of lawyers in Syria and the mobilization of the bar associations in order for them to support people in prison in Syria. However, in 2011, the context changed with the revolution of the political opposition, and in 2012, people started talking about crimes against humanity. At that time, the EMHRN held many seminars aiming at reinforcing the networking of Syrian militants and their capacity building as well at reinforcing women's rights.

The Project coordinator informed that, in 2013, the EMHRN started to reinforce the documentation capacities of its partners in Syria and to bring people together from certain groups in Syria for workshops and seminars in order to develop a network of researchers that can inform the public and the Network on the situation in Syria. The EMHRN is thus holding files on specific cases with a high degree of documentation in terms of medical reports etc. that will be used for thematic reports on detention centres, the judiciary etc. In relation to women's rights, it is sometimes difficult to get information on sexual crimes, and the EMHRN has not yet been able to locate a women's rights organisation that is good at documenting sexual violations.

According to the Project coordinator, the Network is working on two levels, i.e. the UN Human Rights Council that sent a fact finding mission to Syria, and the EU that is promoting human rights groups. The Working group is also cooperating with international organisations, although it is difficult to coordinate actions and adopt a common strategy with them due to different capacities. In addition, the Working group is cooperating with the EMHRN's members in Syria as well with new organisations. However, the Syrians do not seem to have a global vision, nor any coordination among them, but try to impose their own agenda. The Project coordinator ended his presentation by asking the EC to which extend the Syrian organisations could be integrated in the Network.

Michel Tubiana asked whether the documentation of violations is gathered from all parties of the conflict in Syria which the Project coordinator confirmed. Marc Schade-Poulsen said that, in relation to the situation in

Syria, the EMHRN does not have a political position on arms, security zones etc. as it was also the case with the war in Libya. He thought it could be interesting to discuss the EMHRN's political position in conflicts like the one in Syria, also to strengthen its lobbying.

Søs Nissen thought that it was good that the EMHRN had found its own niche for its work in Syria. She suggested the EMHRN to look into if any of the major humanitarian actors on the ground could support the EMHRN's project in Syria. The Project coordinator answered by saying that it could be foreseen to work with humanitarian organisations, for instance on documentation, however he did not find that these organisations are indispensable for the EMHRN's work.

Eugenia Papamakariou found it problematic that some of the EMHRN's partners are based in the United States, and she would like to know the position of the Network's partners in relation to the violations on both sides. In line with this, Osman Isci asked whether the EMHRN is double-checking its contacts and their positions to ensure that the EMHRN stays objective and maintains its credibility. The Project coordinator said that the Syrian contacts living in the United States live in exile and represent member organisations in Syria, and he did not think that they could be excluded from the EMHRN's work. He furthermore noted that during the training sessions on documentation, there is training on international law and training on the techniques of documentation. Those who have been trained by the EMHRN become sources of information and send documentation to the EMHRN that the Network validates in order to ensure its credibility. The EMHRN's added value is that the Syrians are trained to document the violations themselves.

Ayachi Hammami said that it was worth noting that a big part of Syria is sheltered from the war which has not been mentioned in the media. He suggested the EMHRN to work on the human rights defenders in Syria who currently undergo trials in Sharia courts under the control of the Salafists. The Project coordinator answered by saying that some of the areas are under the control of the Salafists. The Working group would like to work with Syrian lawyers on issues pertaining to the judiciary system, however some of them fear for their lives if they pass on information to the EMHRN.

Alay Cherif Chamhari said that during the last Gender Working group meeting, there had been testimonies on violence in camps inside and outside Syria, i.e. rapes, forced marriages, forced prostitution etc. by both parties of the conflict. She was not sure whether these violations had been documented. The Project coordinator said that two reports had been drafted, i.e. on the fight against impunity and on women's rights, in relation to the project on Syria. Unfortunately, there was no reliable documentation on the violations against women and he thought that the EMHRN should work more with the women's rights organizations on the ground in order to gather documentation on the violations.

Michel Tubiana asked when the two reports mentioned above would be published. He also noted that the international human rights instruments are the constant reference for the EMHRN's work. The EMHRN should be against dictatorship, and the Syrians have the right to stand up against dictatorship, he said. However, both parties have perpetrated crimes during the conflict. The Project coordinator answered that the reports are available in unedited versions but still have to be analysed by an expert.

Document:

13.1 Syria Solidarity project – briefing (*for information*)

14. Venue for EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013

Moderator: Michel Tubiana

It was suggested to hold the next EC meeting on 18-20 October 2013 in Beirut or in Cairo depending on the developments in these countries.