



# EMHRN: Work Programme 2015-2017



Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network  
Réseau Euro-méditerranéen des droits de l'Homme  
الشبكة الأوروبية-المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

**Copenhagen/Brussels,**

Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)  
Vestergade 16, 2nd floor  
DK-1456 Copenhagen K  
Denmark

Tel: +45 32 64 17 00

—

Rue de Londres 17  
1050 Brussels  
Belgium

Tel: +32 2 503 06 86

[www.euromedrights.org](http://www.euromedrights.org)

# Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network

## Work Programme 2015-2017



Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network  
Réseau Euro-méditerranéen des droits de l'Homme  
الشبكة الأوروبية-المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان



# Table of Content

Introduction	6
1. Looking Back on the Past Three Years	7
A. Regional developments	7
B. The situation of human rights organisations and activists	8
C. Opportunities	8
2. EMHRN Response To The Challenges In The Region	9
3. EMHRN Programmes	11
A. Regional thematic work	11
1. Protecting and promoting enabling spaces for civil society work, including freedom of association and assembly	12
2. Protecting and promoting rule of law	13
3. Gender Equality and Women's rights	14
4. Migrants' and refugees' rights	14
5. Economic and Social Rights	15
6. The fight against discrimination, including freedom of conscience, and the right of minorities	16
B. Country approach	17
1. Algeria	17
2. Egypt	18
3. Libya	18
4. Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians	19
5. Syria	20
6. Tunisia	21
4. Working Methods	22
A. Promoting networking through working groups and solidarity groups	22
B. Advocacy	23
C. Communication	23
D. Partnerships and members	24
E. Gender Mainstreaming	24
F. Evaluation	24
5. Organisational Issues	25
A. The Executive Committee	25
B. The Secretariat	26
C. Funding	26

# Introduction

This document presents the EMHRN's three year work program for 2015, 2016, and 2017. It is based on the six years strategy that was adopted at the Network's last General Assembly in Copenhagen, June 2012. It is introduced by an overview of important developments that took place in the region since then; and it is followed by an assessment of the challenges arising from the EMHRN's implementation of the first three years of the strategy.

After this discussion the document then moves into more details of the next three years regional and national work. This part is followed by a description of main methodological tools that the EMHRN will use in implementing the program. Finally, the document concludes with an overview of plans to consolidate the organisational set-up of the EMHRN.



# 1. Looking Back on the Past Three Years

## A. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The current EMHRN strategy 2014-2018 was adopted in a political context where the revolutionary moments and uprisings in the Arab world had recently dramatically altered the political landscape of the region; while in Europe, in particular in the South European countries, large parts of the populations were experiencing drastic economic and social cut-downs following prolonged economic crisis.

At that time the outcome of the political struggles in the South and East Mediterranean region seemed open and leading the countries away from past authoritarian systems. Both Tunisia and Egypt gave rise to hope that they were in a transitional process that might lead to democracy. It was not clear then that the Syrian civil war would lead to the largest contemporary, humanitarian crisis in the world and that the fights between the different factions in Libya would result in an almost break-down of the state.

Today, the Euro-Mediterranean region and the neighbouring countries witness an increased militarization both of state and non-state actors including global and regional powers as well as jihadi fighter groups coming from Europe and most of the Middle East countries. This situation has further impacted on Europe, with criminal attacks on freedom of expression and on opinion holders and Jewish communities leading to governmental initiatives that risk encroaching further on freedoms in Europe.

Lack of respect for fundamental freedoms, of independence of the judiciary, of respect of economic, social and cultural rights, and of women's rights as well as widespread inequalities and discrimination remain salient features of the region. The region also witnessed an increase of violence against women such as in the Syrian war and in

attacks against women's rights activists. Also religiously motivated encroachments on the freedom of conscience and minority rights remain widespread.

Israel has continued its occupation of the Palestinian Territory, and settlement expansion, while three attacks on Gaza led to the killing of thousands of innocent people including women and children with full impunity for the perpetrators. In the meantime the Western Sahara conflict, the Turkish-Kurdish peace talks – as well as the division of Cyprus – remained unsolved.

The number of people dying in the Mediterranean Sea, 'the largest cemetery in the region' increased and the European states (with few notable exceptions) responded to growing refugee flows by increasing border controls. Europe, apart from Greece, witnessed a further rise of right wing parties at national and European elections but also social movements organising themselves in the light of the prolonged economic crisis and the economic and social cut-down policies set-out by the regional and international financial institutions. In general, a large number of countries in the region suffered from economic problems caused by the dynamics that were set-off by the Arab Spring as well as by the global economic situation.

Looking at the international level, the UN through its treaty bodies, special procedures, UPRs and Commissions of Inquiry continued to document gross human rights violations and war crimes in the region. However, the international community failed to live up to its responsibility to end the conflicts and fight impunity. Also, the League of Arab States was unable to turn Arab human rights bodies in-the-making into a credible regional instrument, and the Union for the Mediterranean remained largely unengaged in human rights and democracy issues.

The European Union, through its renewed Neighbourhood Policy, did show a welcomed increase in its support to civil society, in particular through an upgrade and diversification of its financial instruments, and its ambition to promote 'deep democracy' through a 'more for more' approach.

However, the EU did not develop a regional vision for the Mediterranean including how to counter shrinking spaces for civil society and to protect rule of law principles (while sticking to economic liberalisation policies, and restrictions in the free movement of people outside European borders). Its foreign policy remained weak, compared to its

economic size, and often remained at the level of the 'lowest common denominator' of member states when it came to larger political challenges such as General Sisi's take-over of power in Egypt, Israel's attacks on Gaza, the situation in Western Sahara.

## B. THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS AND ACTIVISTS

Compared to the situation in 2012, the overall human rights and democracy situation in the region has deteriorated, and spaces for civil society work, and that of human rights organisations in particular, have been shrinking in many countries of the region.

In Syria it has become increasingly difficult to work on human rights from inside the country and a large number of human rights defenders have fled the country. Also in Libya the life of human rights activists are threatened and many have had to flee the country. Egypt witnessed a clamp down on civil society that is critical to the Sisi regime, while Algerian civil society remains largely isolated from the outside world. In Lebanon rights organisations find room to do conduct human rights and humanitarian work, while Jordanian organisations' work is restricted by tight legislation and control of their work; both countries face political dead locks while receiving enormous influxes of refugees from Syria. The Syrian war also had a huge impact on the situation in Turkey but a main challenge for human rights organisations here stems from the majority rule of the AKP and its gradual taking-over of state institutions, from police brutality and from inconclusive peace negotiations with the PKK.

In Tunisia and Morocco the situation is different and civil society has space to influence the political process of 'translating' constitutions into legislation and practices that are protective of human rights and democratic principles – although current systematic attacks against Moroccan and Sahrawi human rights activists does not augur well for the situation in Morocco.

When it comes to Europe, civil society organisations in several countries faced attacks on their right to associate or assemble, and a main factor influencing the work of civil society organisations concerned with the Euro-Med space has been the general austerity measures and the cut-downs on governmental budgets, leading to a more inward looking political climate, jeopardizing the national and international actions of many organisations.

Austerity measures and cuts in the public sector also had a negative impact on women's employment and access to services, undermining gender equality and exposing women to the risk of violence.

## C. OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the many worrying threats to human rights and human rights organisations' work in the region, the EMHRN believes there are also a number of elements and assets to build on over the next three years. First of all, the political 'climate' in the region has de facto been 'unfrozen' and can still go in many different directions.

Although oppression has cracked down on different societies, including mass killings, torture, and arbitrary arrests, people do not accept that their voices be silenced as they were before. Due amongst other to the long standing work of EMHRN members, human rights, including women's rights, are today an integral part of societal debates and of the political discourse of a large number of political leaders and cannot to be dismissed as exemplified by the constitutional debates in Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia. Tunisia experienced a democratic process facilitated by civil society forces in a way that has rarely been seen at the global level, some argue that Morocco is on the same path towards democracy as Tunisia while this point of view remains contested by others.

Human rights organisations are no longer confined to larger cities but find resonance in the marginalised regions of various countries. In several parts of the South and East Mediterranean region human rights organisations are going through a generational change with young democracy activists coming up on the political and social scene including a high percentage of women. A number of European civil society organisations that before the uprisings were absent from the South and East Mediterranean region are now present on the ground. And new social movements emerged in Europe in the light of the economic crisis and the international financial institutions' dictates – becoming potential allies of civil society in the South.

Human rights progressive governments, institutional and other political stakeholders within the EU system, EU member states and in the South also remains important allies for human rights promotion and protection work.



The new EU Commission and Parliament, and the current revision of the renewed European Neighbourhood Policy may provide new entrance points for human rights activists. Also the Palestinian Authorities' accession to the Rome Treaty and a large number of international conventions - including the CEDAW - with a growing international pressure to ban all support to the Israeli settlements, provide avenues for new civil society initiatives on the Middle East conflict.

While the current situation mainly requires actions to protect human rights activists, human rights values and democratic principles, general and specific opportunities as those mentioned above should be built upon in the future.

## 2. EMHRN Response to the Challenges in the Region

Over the past three years, the EMHRN engaged with a range of actors in different countries of the region.

Through two pioneering reports it documented the situation of the right to peaceful assembly in the region, a key right to protect and promote in the context of the Arab uprisings and of the social protest movements in Europe. Its work on the judiciary focussed on trial monitoring as a civil society instrument for solidarity with human rights activists and for high-lighting the lack of independence and impartiality of the judiciaries.

In its work on women's rights and gender equality the EMHRN timely shifted focus towards the intensified forms of violence against women brought on by the revolutions and the continued economic crisis in Europe and the negative effects this violence has on gender equality throughout the Euro-Med region. Migration and refugee work in turn highlighted the need to protect the rights of migrants and refugees where borders are increasingly setup, be it in the Mediterranean by the EU, the EU member states with the assistance of the Frontex Agency, or in the South, such as between Greece and Turkey, Algeria and Morocco and in the Sinai.

The EMHRN did not manage, as it had hoped for, to launch two new programs on major regional issues, on economic and social rights and on discriminations respectively, but it believes this will be feasible in the next years to come. Except for its work on migrant and refugee rights it did not engage in rights problems in Europe as it may have the potential to do.

The EMHRN was, particularly at country level, able to strengthen its work and adapt to the local and changing situations. The EMHRN's WG on Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians remained a key reference point for human rights based civil society advocacy in Europe. The EMHRN supported Syrian human rights defenders and developed their capacity to document human rights violations, particularly violence against women, and war crimes as well as to cooperate on advocacy. The EMHRN conducted extensive advocacy activities with its Egyptian members and partners as they gradually became victims of more and more attacks; it facilitated access of its Algerian members to the international community, and identified a core group of Libyan human rights defenders with whom to work in the future. In Morocco, the EMHRN took part in a number of activities to support civil society in its work to 'translate' the constitution into legislation that is respective of international human rights standards and democratic principles, and it high-lighted the situation of those activists who are peacefully defending the view that the Sahrawi people has the right to decide on its own future.

Over the next three years, the EMHRN will need to continuously react and act on the changing circumstances in the region; in that regard it will remain highly important for the EMHRN to stay flexible and open to arising opportunities and challenges. At the same time it needs to present mid-term perspectives on its work in terms of applicable programmes and projects that respond to the needs of its members and partners as well as to donor requirements.

The EMHRN believes that a main way forward is to strengthen and expand its work at national level and in relation to bi-lateral relations. The region is today even less homogeneous than when the EMHRN strategy was adopted three years ago as the situation now ranges from civil war situations, over authoritarian repression, to situations of transition towards democracy or to well- established democratic systems in Europe.

The EMHRN needs to be present where the most influential political processes take place. This will be done by continuing its work on Israel, Palestine, Syria, Algeria and Tunisia, upgrading its work on Egypt and Libya while exploring possibilities for being more present in Morocco in order to regularly follow-up on the country's reform programs; finally, it will explore options for further work in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

However, the EMHRN gains its strength and cohesion from being a regional, transnational organisation. The EMHRN is one of the few settings where civil society organisations

from all strands of the Euro-Med region meet at equal level to work together, learn from one another and help one another in protecting and promoting human rights while providing regional civil society responses to issues of regional and national concern.

However, in order for regional work to remain political relevant it needs to address regional dynamics and political set-ups that have political bearings in terms of outcome.

As mentioned above, from a regional perspective the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Neighbourhood Policy are not strong, and no new regional vision for the region emerged from governmental or intergovernmental sides during the past three years on how to move a human rights or democracy agenda at that level – including on the issue of promoting enabling environments for civil society or promoting rule of law matters.

Today there is inter alia little response at the regional level to EMHRN and to other organisations' work on the crucial question of protecting human rights activists and spaces for civil society work, as well as for promoting democratisation through rule of law measures. Respondents are to be found at national and bi-lateral levels.

However, other issues do meet cross regional political resonance. These are issues where there are both regional policy measures in place and where civil society organisations across the region have an immediate interest in networking, such as on 1) the question of 'managing mixed migrant flows' and respecting the rights of migrants and refugees; and 2) on the question of trade liberalisation and protecting economic and social rights. Furthermore, there are issues where the policy framework may be less strong but where cross regional civil society dynamics and inter-connections can be observed. These are related to the question of 3) gender equality and women's rights, in particular the question of violence against women; and to the question of 4) protecting minority rights, including freedom of conscience, and fighting discrimination.

The EMHRN will consolidate/ develop work in these four areas of work over the next three years that will also help it in increasingly addressing European civil society concerns. Meanwhile, it will continue its effort to protect spaces for civil society work and attacks against its members and human rights activists in general.

# 3. EMHRN Programmes

## A. REGIONAL THEMATIC WORK

Although, the EMHRN over the past three years has increased its work at national levels, regional/ thematic work remains EMHRN core business. The EMHRN gains its strength and cohesion from being a regional, transnational organisation and the Network can be considered an important vehicle for dialogue and exchange in a region ridden by increased tension, militarisation and polarised views of 'the other'. In addition, a two-way relation between the regional and national work is useful where the EMHRN's thematic work at regional level is fed into its work at national level and vice versa. It enables the EMHRN to provide diversified responses to human rights issues and situations within its fields of priorities.

**The EMHRN had in the past three years the following headings for its regional, thematic work:**

- » Democratic transition, legislative and judicial reform.
  - » The right to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly.
  - » The independence of the judiciary and transitional justice.
- » Conflict situations and the respect for human rights, international and international humanitarian law (IHL).
- » Gender Equality and Women's Rights.
- » The fight against discrimination.
- » Migrants' and refugees' rights.
- » Economic and Social Rights.

These are fields where the EMHRN developed a strong track record, or has the potential to do so, bringing added value to the members' work without duplicating other initiatives. The EMHRN believes that these areas of work remain broadly relevant,

taking the situation in the region into consideration as described above, while needing some adjustments.

**The next three years the EMHRN will build on the past three years' experience and focus on the following 6 regional issues:**

1. Protecting and promoting enabling spaces for civil society work, including freedom of association and assembly.
2. Protecting and promoting rule of law.
3. Gender equality and women's rights in particular as concerns combatting violence against women and impunity in this regard.
4. The fight against discrimination, including freedom of conscience, and the right of minorities.
5. The right of migrants and refugees.
6. Economic and social rights.

As can be seen from the headings, and as will be further elaborated below, the question of fundamental freedoms and rule of law matters will, due to the changes in the region, more be dealt with from a protection angle than from the political transition angle of the past Work Programme.

In addition the question of conflict situations, in particular the Middle East conflict will be moved from the regional chapter to the country chapter. There is no doubt that that the conflicts in the region have impact that reaches far beyond their geographical scope, and that their solution implies engagement by regional and international actors. However, although the different conflicts have elements in common, for example as concerns the question of impunity, the approach to their solution is to be sought in each of their own specific contexts. EMHRN members working in countries of conflicts deal with human rights and IHL implications from a national angle, although regional and international advocacy is a needed part of their work. Hence, the EMHRN, for conceptual reasons wants to move its work on conflicts to the country chapters while seeking to identify possible synergies between the work of its members on the different conflicts, such as cooperation between Palestinian and Syrian human rights and women's rights activists that was initiated by the EMHRN.

## 1. Protecting and promoting enabling spaces for civil society work, including freedom of association and assembly

### Objectives

The human rights framework of the activity is the protection and promotion of the human rights values and international standards pertaining to freedom of association and assembly and to human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders.

The general objective is to develop capacity for sustained civil society monitoring, expertise and action to influence policies and practices aimed at protecting and promoting spaces for civil society with a focus on freedom of association, assembly and human rights defenders.

The question of promoting an enabling environment for civil society work is a key field of action for the EMHRN being a network composed of civil society organisations that depend on the right to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, of expression, of movement, etc. to conduct their work.

Regretfully, during the past three years civil society spaces have been shrinking in many parts of the EuroMed region including freedom of association being under attack in particular in the South and the right to peaceful assembly being violated in many parts of the region.

The EMHRN has over the years gained in-depth knowledge of the situation of freedom of association in the EuroMed region. In the past three years it issued two pioneering regional reports on the right to peaceful assembly covering both the South Mediterranean region and the EU. It conducted missions and advocacy activities on the situation in specific countries (in particular Algeria, Egypt, Israel and Turkey) and many solidarity actions with individual human rights defenders.

The EMHRN's working group on Freedom of Association and Assembly was a main platform of the EMHRN to work on these issues seeking to develop regional civil society responses and initiatives. It provided an important forum for exchange of experience and information and guided the EMHRN in its action on particular country issues.

As mentioned, the EMHRN finds it crucial to continue investing in this field of work. However, the situation in the countries of the region is becoming increasingly differentiated and the regional, political frameworks for dealing with these matters are almost inexistent. This fact leads the EMHRN to believe that maintaining a standing regional forum on freedom of association and assembly is not the most efficient way to achieve political impact.

### Focussing on the following targeted actions over the next three years may yield more results:

- » Monitoring EU and international programs and initiatives in the region concerned with sustaining spaces for civil society action – in this regard call for an annual seminar of human rights organisations to assess the situation in the region, share experience and develop common stands.
- » Advocating for the establishing of a regional civil society forum supported by the EU, democratic governments and political forces in the region aimed at promoting enabling spaces for civil society work.
- » Developing trainings for civil society actors on the right to freedom of association and assembly in order to increase their capacity to protect and promote these rights.
- » Monitor the respect of the UN Human Rights Defenders Declaration and the implementation of the EU's guide lines on human rights defenders.
- » Conducting solidarity actions, trial monitoring and other missions, statements and work-shops supporting civil society groups where they, or their work, are under attack.
- » Bringing members who are in a similar situation together from various countries and strands so they can benefit directly from each other's experience.

## 2. Protecting and promoting rule of law

### Objectives

The human rights framework of this activity is the United Nations standards on rule of law which refers to a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, independence and impartiality of the judicial systems, etc.

The general objective is to develop civil society capacity to work on rule of law principles within the context of the fight against terrorism and radicalisation by enhancing regional cooperation and exchange between human rights NGOs, lawyers and judges aimed at influencing national and regional initiatives in this field.

The rule of law, at the heart of which is the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, remains key for upholding societies respectful of human rights and democratic principles.

The EMHRN has built up a good track record in the field of the independence and impartiality of the judiciary and its reports on the independence of the judiciaries in Algeria, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia have several times been referred to as reference documents. Furthermore, the EMHRN conducted several trial monitoring missions to Egypt and Turkey and published two comprehensive reports in that regard that highlighted strengths and deficiencies in the judiciaries of the concerned countries.

The EMHRN finds it crucial to continue investing in matters relating to rule of law and the judiciaries. However, as in the case of freedom of association and assembly the situation in countries of the region varies a lot and is dealt with as national sovereignty issues by states and to a large degree by civil society as well. At the same time, regional political frameworks for dealing with these matters are almost inexistent. These facts lead the EMHRN to believe that questions relating specifically to the judiciaries are best dealt with at the national level. This is also the case when it comes to transitional justice that today is at a standstill in most of the EuroMed countries.

However, the growing regional impact of the war in Syria and Iraq, the break-down of the state in Libya, and the absence of strong state presence in the Sahel, has led to an increased militarisation of both state and non-state actors in the region and an increase in terrorist acts and threats. The combat of terrorism and radicalisation – as real, perceived and/ or politicised threats – is currently leading to increased cross-regional and inter-governmental cooperation, new anti-terror or anti-radicalisation initiatives that in many cases violate basic rights and rule of law principles (this being said without questioning the need for protecting societies against terrorist acts).

The EMHRN believes this matter needs strengthened civil society cooperation at regional level and that EMHRN through its membership can bring added values to both regional and national initiatives and debates.

### The EMHRN therefore suggest over the next three years to:

- » Maintain and EMHRN Working group on justice aimed at exchanging experience on law and practice in the fight against terrorism and radicalisation, develop a regional forum of expertise and policy proposals in this regard. The WG will be tasked with.
- » Monitoring compliance with rule of law and human rights standards in the combat of terrorism and radicalisation at regional and national level.
- » Developing research and issuing reports and statements as appropriate.
- » Developing national and regional advocacy initiatives.
- » Conduct solidarity actions, trial monitoring and other missions, statements and work-shops supporting victims of terrorist attacks, of human rights violation under anti-terror legislation and acts.

### 3. Gender Equality and Women's rights

#### Objectives

The overall framework is the protection and promotion of human rights values and international standards relating to women's rights and gender equality in particular the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

The general objective is to effectively contribute to the development of sustainable civil society networks and groups of actors in the EuroMed region with capacity to influence civil society and decision makers to actively promote and protect the rights of women in the region, in particular on the question of Violence against Women (VAW) as well as actively promote gender equality by integrating gender mainstreaming into their work.

The EMHRN has had women's rights as one of its thematic foci since the year 2000, while developing a gender mainstreaming approach throughout its activities and structures. In 2011-12 it conducted a series of meetings in the different South Mediterranean countries in order to support local women's rights groups in the Arab Spring context and it was also a main organiser of a regional civil forum in preparation of a EuroMed Ministerial meeting on the role of women in society.

Since 2011 the Euro-Mediterranean region has faced intensified patterns of violence against women, caused by war and conflict, regime and non-state actors' attacks on women activists, as well as the global economic recession. This led the EMHRN Working Group on Gender Equality and Women's Rights to concentrate efforts on this issue, considering also that most WG members dealt with VAW in their daily work.

A root cause of violence against women is the lack of equality between women and men in private and public spheres of society and VAW sustains and perpetuates these inequalities. As such, fighting VAW is closely linked to the combat for gender equality, the full implementation of CEDAW and the lifting of state reservations to key articles thereof. In addition, fighting violence against women is a way for otherwise opposed actors to share common agendas as few can disagree to the huge problem posed by VAW both for the women themselves as well as for societies.

**VAW is a concern for all countries in the EuroMed region and several political frameworks exist for dealing with this issue. It furthermore engages women's rights advocates in social and political dynamics all over the region. Hence, over the next three years the EMHRN will work to combat violence against women and fight impunity in this regard by:**

- » Maintaining the EMHRN Working Group on Gender Equality and Women's Rights as a regional forum for exchange and policy development on the protecting and promotion of the norms and standards of the CEDAW through the fight against VAW and impunity in this regard and as a forum of expertise and action on gender mainstreaming.
- » Developing tools and trainings for advocacy on the fight against VAW and impunity for VAW in relation to relevant regional and international bodies.
- » Through missions, statements, advocacy and workshops support women, including women's rights defenders victims of violence or initiatives of organisations protecting and promoting women's rights.
- » Monitoring policies and initiatives of the EU, European Council and international bodies relevant to combatting VAW and fighting impunity and conducting advocacy in this regard when relevant.

As mentioned further below, the EMHRN will further strengthen gender mainstreaming of its own activities and structures and also offer support to member and partner organisations in this regard, with a view to enhance gender equality in the Euro-Med region. In addition it will pursue its goal of having at least one EMHRN member per country specialised in women's rights.

### 4. Migrants' and refugees' rights

#### Objectives

The overall framework of the activity is the protection and promotion of international human rights standards and international humanitarian law regarding migrants' and refugees' rights, 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 and projects aimed at protecting and promoting rights of migrants and refugees as well as civil society capacity to influence and engage in dialogue with governments and EU institutions on questions relating to human rights, migration and refugees.

The question of protecting undocumented migrants and refugees remains a burning, common cross-regional human rights issue with millions of refugees fleeing Syria, the Libyan state breaking down, the EU reinforcing its externalisation of migrant and refugee management and with new fences being established.

The EMHRN has over the past years developed and implemented many activities in the field of migrant and refugee protection. In relation to the EU it issued policy papers addressing the EU, fact sheets and reports about migrant and refugee rights; it took active part in the Frontexit campaign, and it co-organised missions to the Greek-Turkish and Algerian-Moroccan border respectively and is engaging in dialogue with the Tunisian government about the EU Mobility Partnership. It developed capacity of its members by facilitating meetings of organisations concerned with the situation of migrants and refugees in the Sinai; broadening its networking and cooperated with a great number of partner organisations, and conducting trainings for North African human rights activists.

### **The EMHRN's objective over the next three years is:**

- » Continuing the work of its Working Group on Migration and Refugees as a regional forum for exchange and policy development on migrant and refugee rights.
- » Developing tools and trainings on EU migration and refugee externalisation policies, i.e. European mobility partnerships, readmission agreements, and border control – also in relation to the EU's 'neighbours' of neighbours' - addressing in particular South and East Mediterranean civil society organisations.
- » Contributing to developing networking of South and East Mediterranean civil society organisation enabling these to provide joint answers to European policies.
- » Contributing to developing networking of civil society organisation where border control and related mechanisms put migrants and refugee rights at risk such as organising workshops of facilitating the participation of Euro-Med expertise to international/regional/national events.

- » Through missions, statements, advocacy and workshops supporting civil society organisations in their actions to protect and promote migrant and refugee rights, including the rights of migrant and refugee women.
- » Monitoring EU and governmental policies and conducting advocacy in this regard when relevant.

## **5. Economic and Social Rights**

The overall framework is the protection and promotion of the international human rights standards pertaining to economic and social rights.

The general objective is the setting-up of a civil society instrument and mechanism to monitor the impact of the economic relations between the EU and the South and East Mediterranean countries on human rights in the EuroMed region.

The EMHRN has for several years acknowledged the importance of dealing with economic and social rights in EU-Mediterranean relations as they shape women and men's everyday economic and social life including in the sense that societies in both Europe and the South to a large extent are governed by the same neo-liberal thinking and austerity measures.

The centrality of the issue was confirmed by the uprisings in the Arab region that to a large extent were motivated by economic and social concerns including unemployment. Today, economic and social discontent remains at the forefront of social movements and protests that can be observed not only in the South Mediterranean region, but also in EU countries, in particular South European countries that were subjects to the European and international institutions requests for austerity measures.

Economic policies and relations in the EuroMed region, meeting the support of international institutions such as the IMF, do not only pose challenges in terms of continued or deepening economic inequalities between the EU and the South Mediterranean region, but in terms of the participation of citizens, both women and men, on both shores of the Mediterranean in the development of their societies and in promoting and protecting their economic and social rights. Hence a regional approach to economic and social rights, including the economic and social rights of women, has the

potential to strengthen solidarity between EU and South and East Mediterranean civil society groups.

In the past three years the EMHRN did not achieve what it set out for in its work program in terms of setting up a working group on economic and social rights. However, it identified the process to arrive at its establishment and it identified funds to initiate work.

The EMHRN believes it over the next three years will be able to set-up of a regional Working Group tasked with a) monitoring the impact of the economic relations between the EU and the South Mediterranean countries on the human rights of women and men in the countries of the EuroMed region, b) developing regional civil society responses to economic policies in EuroMed relations bridging between the local and the regional work, c) developing links of cooperation and solidarity between civil society actors in the EU and the South and East Mediterranean region concerned by these issues.

#### **In order to arrive at that the EMHRN will:**

- » Conduct a mapping of existing civil society initiatives in the field of economic and social rights, including the economic and social rights of women.
- » Organise a regional seminar aimed at identifying priority field of actions.
- » Seek cooperation and partnership with other regional initiatives.
- » Raise funds to ensure sustainability of the WG.

## **6. The fight against discrimination, including freedom of conscience, and the right of minorities**

### **Objectives**

The human rights framework is the international human rights standards pertaining to non-discrimination, the protection of minorities and freedom of conscience.

The general objective is to develop regional civil society forums aimed at promoting exchanges on and civil society responses to national and regional policy initiatives as well as practices related to the fight against discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

The EMHRN believes that there are debates and issues today pertaining to human rights values and culture that are common to Europe and the South and East Mediterranean region and in which human rights defenders from all strands of the EuroMed should be engaged.

These debates turn around questions related to discrimination (and closely linked to that racism and xenophobia), the protection of minorities, to religion and citizenship (and hence to civil and political rights), freedom of expression and the right to religious freedom, and to freedom of conscience.

The EMHRN believes that it is important that human rights defenders in the EuroMed region take part in debates on these issues particularly when they give rise to discriminatory policies. It believes the Network has the potential to bring added value to discussions on these themes due to the unique composition of its membership. It also believes it has the potential to influence public debates and national policies in this regard.

The theme was included in the EMHRN's last work program but unfortunately the Network did not identify the necessary human and financial resources to take the matter forward. Also the issues embedded in the theme are vast and there is a need for a reflection and scoping exercise before taking concrete action.

The EMHRN will therefore task the Executive Committee to consult with members and partners on where in particular it could have added value and on what its priority actions should be.

## B. COUNTRY APPROACH

The EMHRN has over the past three years reinforced its work with members and partners at country level based on the consideration that if the EMHRN gains strength and cohesion from being a regional, transnational organisation, the most influential political processes take place at national and bi-lateral levels.

The EMHRN will in the future seek necessary resources to continue monitoring the human rights situation in each country of the South and East Mediterranean within its thematic fields of priorities, while also monitoring general developments in Europe. It will continue to assess how human rights concerns within the different countries can be brought into play at regional level.

In particular, it will over the next three years continue to be in close dialogue with members and partners in order to ensure that its actions match the specific situation of each country and that of its civil society.

The EMHRN will pursue its specific programmes on Israel and Palestine, its mission in Tunisia, and its programmes on Algeria and Syria.

A new priority action of the EMHRN will be to engage in needed protection and international advocacy work for its Egyptian members and partners while efforts will be done to identify means to assist Libyan human rights activists.

The EMHRN will also see how it, through its sub-regional Maghreb office in Tunisia, can contribute to developing networking initiatives of human rights activists, including women's rights activists, in the Maghreb and how it can bring added value to the work of civil society in Morocco.

The EMHRN will be open to invest in opportunities to strengthen its work on Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey including support of EMHRN advocacy staff to provide access to the EU institutions. Finally, should the human rights situation in some European countries deteriorate significantly, the EMHRN will be ready to consider country specific actions in this regard. In Denmark, the EMHRN will continue its active engagement in the Danish Arab Partnership Programme.

### 1. Algeria

The overall framework is the protection and promotion of democratic principles, international human rights norms and standards, international law and international humanitarian law.

The general objective is to increase the protection of human rights defenders and organisations, including those working with women's rights, and contribute to the emergence of a less isolated and stronger Algerian civil society.

In Algeria, international human rights norms on freedom of expression, association and assembly are violated and human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders, face regular harassment. Repressive laws and regulations, including the law on associations of 2012, are used to stifle human rights activities while access of foreign observers and human rights organisations are restricted by the authorities. In order to weaken solidarity and non-violent expressions of citizenship, the regime not only isolates human rights defenders from the international scene but also reinforces divisions amongst other by creating government controlled 'NGOs'.

International organisations and Western diplomacies have little leverage on Algeria with regards to human rights due to Algeria's supposed role in fighting terrorism and as an oil and gas producer. European civil society organisations and governments generally lack information on the human rights situation in the country and increased international solidarity with Algerian human rights and women's rights organisations and activists is needed to bring them out of their isolation.

The EMHRN has been one of few international human rights organisations working in Algeria in support of its members and partners. It is a work that has been hampered by the fact that several EMHRN representatives are refused entry visa, and by the close monitoring of civil society activities by the security services. The EMHRN established a solidarity group for Algeria aimed at strengthening networking among EMHRN members and partners and at linking them up to civil societies in countries that are important to Algeria. It also conducted advocacy missions and issued briefs about the situation in Algeria with its members and partners and facilitated contacts to decision makers. Unfortunately the solidarity group was not able to continue its joint work due to discords between the main partners.

However the EMHRN believes it is important to continue solidarity work with Algerian civil society and to contribute over the next three years to the strengthening of human rights organisations' capacity to promote and protect human rights including women's rights.

#### **The EMHRN will:**

- » Engage in a dialogue with its Algerian members and partners on how they can benefit from EMHRN networking activities.
- » Closely monitor the situation of key human rights issues, including women's rights.
- » Conduct training on human rights monitoring for its members and partners.
- » Organise advocacy missions to the EU and Geneva.
- » When relevant issue joint briefs on key human rights issues in Algeria.
- » Organise coordination of Algerian human rights organisations when relevant.

## **2. Egypt**

### **Objectives**

The overall framework is the protection and promotion of democratic principles, international human rights norms and standards, international law and international humanitarian law.

The general objective is to contribute to protecting Egyptian human rights activists and their organisations enabling these to pursue their work.

Following the rise to power of General Sisi in Egypt the security environment and human rights situation, including that of human rights organisations and individual activists, has drastically deteriorated. While the regime emphasised the role played by Egypt in ensuring stability and fighting terrorism, thousands of civilians stand before the military courts, and many activists face threats to their lives or imprisonment. Furthermore, although promises have been made by the Egyptian government to deal with the epidemic of violence and sexual harassment against women, actions so far have been cosmetic and serve merely to camouflage the continuous repression of women participating in public life. Meanwhile, the international community, if not

supporting the Egyptian government, is hesitating putting pressure to halt the clamp down on civil society.

In the past three years, the EMHRN followed closely the situation in the country with its members and conducted a large number of advocacy activities in Brussels, other European cities and Cairo amongst other on new repressive laws such as the law on association and on the demonstration law. It also monitored trials against human rights activists.

### **The EMHRN will over the next three years step-up its activities on Egypt in close cooperation with its members and partners and facilitate:**

- » Strengthened cooperation between Egyptian human rights organisations.
- » Promotion of international solidarity and awareness on the situation of Egyptian human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders, and the environment in which they work.
- » It will establish a solidarity group for Egyptian human rights defenders and promote international networking.
- » Conduct advocacy activities in Brussels, Geneva and other important sites to inform about the situation in the country and call governments to act on it.
- » Conduct information and documentation activities targeting international media.
- » Work closely with the EMHRF who will provide direct material support to Egyptian human rights defenders.

## **3. Libya**

The overall framework is the protection and promotion of democratic principles, international human rights norms and standards, international law and international humanitarian law.

The general objective is to contribute to the protection and strengthening of Libyan civil society actions to promote and protect the respect for fundamental rights in the current volatile and hostile transition context.

Libya faces major challenges in its transition process and is at a point of the almost complete breakdown of its state structures. There is a need to rebuild institutions, reform the judicial system and security sectors, draft a new constitution and amend existing laws. The lack of government control of the security sector presents a major challenge for the protection of human rights of Libyan citizens and non-Libyan citizens in the country, including that of Libyan women. In this context the emerging civil society in Libya is facing a multitude of challenges while most of its actors stem from emerging associations that lack experience and expertise to deal with the current situation. In addition, and given the increased level of human rights violations, a main challenge is the lack of documentation of these violations that could serve as instruments for information, awareness raising, advocacy and possible litigation.

Moreover, Libyan human rights defenders and civil society actors currently face serious risks that hamper their work including direct and indirect threats in a context of increasing internal conflicts. As a consequence, a number of human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders, need to hide or flee the country in order to protect their own safety and to continue their work.

The EMHRN is through its office in Tunisia in regular contact with Libyan human rights defenders that had to flee the country. Also it conducted several missions to the country in order to assess the situation and it co-organised with the EMHRF a seminar with Libyan human rights activists and international donors in order to identify the Libyan activists' needs.

The EMHRN will continue its efforts to identify the necessary means to work on Libya aiming at reinforcing the capacities of Libyan NGOs to monitor violations and promote accountability and reforms in the field of human rights, including women rights, through national and regional networking as well as trainings.

## 4. Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians

### Objectives

The overall framework of the activities is the protection and promotion of international human rights standards and international humanitarian law (IHL) relating to conflict prevention, management and resolution.

The general objective is to support a regional civil society advocacy forum capable of influencing civil society and decisions makers on the need for the EU and EuroMed governments to set the respect for human rights and international humanitarian law at the heart of peace promotion and efforts to end the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory.

The Middle East conflict and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory still gives rise to some of the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the region; and its impact reaches far beyond the countries directly involved in the conflict.

The EMHRN has over the years established a strong track record in its work on human rights and IHL respect by Israel and the Palestinian authorities in the Occupied Territory and it strengthened advocacy work done by Israeli, Palestinian, and European human rights civil society groups vis-à-vis the EU institutions and member states. In fact the EMHRN PIP Working Group has become a key reference points for EU human rights and IHL advocacy.

The EMHRN will over the next three years continue sustaining the activities of the EMHRN WG on Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians as a key critical human rights advocacy forum on EU policies pertaining to Israel and Palestine. Project details of EMHRN work on Israel and Palestine will be finalized in dialogue with the PIP Working Group that met in Stockholm on 22-23 May 2015 to define details and focus of its strategy over the next three years.

## **The EMHRN will allocate resources for the EMHRN WG to meet regularly and on this basis:**

- » Conduct research based advocacy missions targeting the EU institutions and EU member states.
- » Continue its annual encounters on EU human rights advocacy for European, Arab, Israeli and Palestinian members and partners and continue cooperation with other initiatives.
- » Where relevant, support new networking initiatives among concerned organisations on key issues pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (such as on Palestinian prisoners, Palestinian refugees, Palestinian women, the International Criminal Court (ICC)).
- » Seek to engage in additional advocacy tracks, for example vis-à-vis the UN institutions, Arab governments, the Israeli government and Arab League when relevant.
- » Monitor the situation in both Israel and Palestine within its thematic fields of concern and take action on human rights violations, including violations of women's rights, when appropriate.
- » Support human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders, when under attack.

Finally, the EMHRN will look into where human rights organisations in other conflict zones of the region may benefit from the experience of the PIP Working Group and that of its members.

## **5. Syria**

The overall framework is the protection and promotion of democratic principles, international human rights norms and standards, international law and international humanitarian law.

The general objective is to increase the capacity of Syrian human rights groups and activists to promote accountability for human rights violations in Syria and in neighbouring countries, while enhancing their protection and the sustainability of their work.

The situation in Syria has developed into a brutal war, with several hundred thousands of Syrians being killed and millions being internally displaced or fleeing their country. While a climate of impunity is reigning for gross and systematic human rights violations, including against women and children, the conflict has become increasingly fragmented and multifaceted as regional and international powers settle their accounts. Besides foreign armed forces that joined the conflict, the recent increase of the so called "Islamic State" group in Eastern Syria has opened new fronts in the fighting resulting in the military intervention of an international coalition under US leadership. In this context human rights work inside the country has become increasingly dangerous and many human rights activists, including women's rights activists, had to flee Syria.

The EMHRN during the past three years conducted a number of training workshops for members and partners inside and outside Syria that are involved in the crucial work of documenting human rights violations, including violence against women, from all sides in the country. It developed training tool kits in this regard, and it organised highly appreciated coordination meetings and advocacy missions with Syrian organisations.

## **Based on the positive feedback it received for this work, the EMHRN wants to strengthen its actions in order to further:**

- » Foster networking amongst Syrian human rights groups and strengthen their links to the regional and international human rights community.
- » Strengthen the capacities of Syrian human rights groups to document and advocate against human rights violations, including violence against women.
- » Carry out advocacy work through joint political initiatives aimed at promoting accountability for human rights violations and providing information on the human rights situation affecting the Syrian population, including Syrian women, in Syria and its neighbouring countries.
- » Work closely with the EMHRF who provides direct material support to Syrian human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders.

The EMHRN will facilitate the coordination of Syrian human rights groups and seek to strengthen Syrian human rights and women's rights activists' international networks. It will conduct joint advocacy activities with its partners in Brussels and Geneva and develop trainer of trainer courses with its Syrian partners.



## 6. Tunisia

### Objectives

The overall framework is the protection and promotion of democratic principles, international human rights norms and standards, international law and international humanitarian law.

The general objective is to support the development of a vibrant civil society in all regions of Tunisia capable of influencing national human rights and women's rights agendas and act at the international level.

The EMHRN was one of the first international organisations to register an office in Tunisia after the revolution to assist its members and new civil society organisations in developing their work in the context of a new Tunisia.

The EMHRN has become a key site for the capacity building of civil society organisations from all over the country, and a trusted partner of the main agenda setting civil society organisations, who appreciate the flexibility of the EMHRN support activities. The EMHRN has also become an interface for dialogue between civil society organisations, the EU and governmental institutions within themes of expertise of the EMHRN.

A main challenge for Tunisia over the next three years will be to continue its way towards the building-up of democratic state institutions, amongst other translating the articles of the constitution into legislation practice that is respectful of human rights, including women's rights.

**The EMHRN wants over the next three years to assist members and partners in contributing to this process. It will on the basis of regular consultation with members and partners:**

- » Monitor the human rights and women's rights situation and provide flexible capacity support to relevant initiatives enabling these to impact on relevant political and legal agendas from a human rights perspective.
- » Continue supporting networking activities bringing organisations in the regions together with organisations based in the capital on key topics for the country (local elections, economic and social reforms, migration issues, women's rights and gender equality etc.).
- » Partner up with other organisations to ensure the implementation of training programs for associations.
- » Ensure solid participation of women, youth and marginalised regions in its activities.
- » Continue networking activities enabling civil society organisations to sustain dialogue with Tunisian and EU decision makers.
- » Work closely with the EMHRF who will provide direct material support to Tunisian human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders.

# 4. Working Methods

The previous pages described the issues on which the EMHRN plans to work over the next three years, in response to the human rights situation in the region and that of human rights organisations. The next pages go through the work methods the EMHRN will use to achieve its objectives.

In this regard it is important to emphasize that the EMHRN is a member based organisation. It was established by human rights organisations in the North and the South for the members who play a central role in monitoring, documenting and advocating for human rights in the region. An important part of the EMHRN's work thus consists, through its networking, advocacy, communication and training activities, in assisting members in strengthening their work and capacity to act – including giving visibility to their work.

It goes without saying that the protection of its members and their organisations, and protecting human rights and women's rights defenders in general, is considered a collective responsibility of the EMHRN. It has had high priority in the past and it will be prioritized and mainstreamed all through its activities over the next three years.

## A. PROMOTING NETWORKING THROUGH WORKING GROUPS AND SOLIDARITY GROUPS

The ability of the EMHRN to bring together human rights defenders from the entire Euro-Med region – the Maghreb, the Mashrek and Europe – is one of its key strengths and added value. Creating spaces for people to network and meet as equal partners to share experiences and ideas has proven a strong and flexible way to strengthen their capacity to act and interact in diverse contexts. It has also proven a solid and flexible way of working in contexts of rapid political changes.

During the years, the EMHRN has developed a solid track record in bringing human rights defenders together in thematic, regional working groups addressing issues of common concern.

In the period since the last General Assembly, the EMHRN strengthened its Working Group method. Firstly, members with a strong track record within the thematic fields of EMHRN activities were prioritized for membership of the Working Groups. Secondly, resource organisations active in the relevant fields were invited to attend the meetings and hereby strengthened the capacity of the Group. Thirdly, nearly all meetings of the Working Groups included half day trainings on a specific theme/issue deemed relevant to its work and fourthly, the working groups identified projects that both matched the work their organisations do on the ground and had regional relevance.

The EMHRN will continue to employ this methodology over the next three years and take steps to further consolidate the working groups by strengthening communication between the WGs and member organisations on a more regular basis.

The EMHRN has benefitted from the experience of these regional networking sites in relation to establishing Solidarity Groups at country level where human rights defenders are at high risk. The EMHRN will pursue the work with these groups that are composed of a core of local members and partners to which are added other EMHRN members and partners outside the country of concern. The functioning of these Solidarity groups vary according to the specific context of each country. Some can be characterised as platforms/ contexts for human rights activists to meet, exchange and coordinate (such as on Syria and Libya where the very volatile situation of human rights activists necessitate flexible, organisational set-ups), others are more structured strategy and advocacy groups such as the one on Egypt.

In situations where human rights defenders have broader spaces for their work, both at national and international level, the EMHRN's interventions are based on the local political agendas as well as members' and partners' needs. For example in Tunisia, EMHRN members and partners meet in local, thematic working groups addressing ways to influence national policies and bi-lateral relations between the EU and Tunisia.

Regional working groups, solidarity groups and local thematic working groups will continue to be core sites for the development of EMHRN policies and initiatives. The

EMHRN will aim at providing these groups with resources enabling them to network, build their capacity through trainings, monitoring through research, reporting, and trial monitoring missions, advocacy through missions and joint activities, as well as solidarity actions. It will also provide them with support to incorporate gender equality perspectives in their work.

## B. ADVOCACY

The EMHRN has gained a strong track record in bringing policies developed by its members, working groups and solidarity groups into intergovernmental and governmental forums. It has a good and solid presence in Brussels where it is recognised as a key and credible civil society partner by the EU institutions that integrated a large number of EMHRN recommendations into their human rights and democracy policies for the region.

The EMHRN also broadened its scope of advocacy, as agreed by the 2012 General Assembly, and organised missions to EU member states and other relevant countries, while increasing activities in Geneva when it could bring added value to EMHRN members' work. It also organised advocacy activities in South Mediterranean countries, such as Morocco, but first and foremost Tunisia where the EMHRN has the strongest presence at national level. Finally, it also helped strengthen the capacity of EMHRN members enabling them to initiate advocacy actions at their own initiative.

The EMHRN will continue on this track while seeking to influence EU human rights policies and pro-actively facilitate action in support of the many human rights instruments that are at the EU's disposal.

The EMHRN will finalise an advocacy strategy paper aimed at strengthening a result based approach that concentrates efforts where most can be gained with available resources whether at EU level, UN level, or national levels while increasing synergies with communication and program work – for example by combining advocacy with campaigning. The strategy will build on EMHRN best practices including active member participation in its delivery, developing broad civil society coalitions when relevant, and coordinating with relevant decision makers.

Finally, the EMHRN will finalise application procedures for eco-soc status at the UN; it will monitor developments within the League of Arab States to assess the relevance of approaching this institution, and, when relevant, look into participation in activities of the Fundamental Rights Agency and the International Organisation of the Francophonie (to which the EMHRN is accredited).

## C. COMMUNICATION

Over the past three years the EMHRN took several steps to strengthen its communication work. It established a Communication Department headed by a Director. It had an independent consultant look into EMHRN communication work to recommend actions to increase the visibility of the EMHRN. Finally, on this basis, the EC agreed on a work plan to upgrade the EMHRN's communication service, including suggesting a change of name to 'EuroMed Rights', which should facilitate visibility of the EMHRN in the media.

The report noted that the EMHRN is more a resource organisation for the media than a 'breaking news' organisation (the latter is the remit of the members). Furthermore, the EMHRN more seeks to influence decision makers and civil society than the public at large. However, media – print, television, radio and social media – are important ways to get messages across to the public.

Implementation of the communication plan met some delays, but it is now up at full speed. A key pillar will be to integrate communication in the early planning of EMHRN program and advocacy activities, including strengthening campaigning efforts of the EMHRN. The EMHRN now rebuilt its data base and web site; it revamped its visual look; and it developed an easily accessible e-library with all EMHRN publications. The EMHRN, under the more media friendly name of EuroMed Rights is now ready over the next three years to build on its communication tool box, publish regular news letters, issue alerts, press releases and statements, briefs and reports and proactively take steps to reach (well defined) target groups for its policies.

## D. PARTNERSHIPS AND MEMBERS

Cooperation, coordination and partnerships with other organisations have been and are part and parcel of the EMHRN's work approach and ethic. Over the next three years the EMHRN will systematically engage with partners at all levels and – as mentioned above - include non-members and new relevant actors in the work of its working groups.

The EMHRN will continue to seek broad alliance with - and outreach to – international non-governmental organisations, environmental and development groups, social forums, political and religious groups where relevant.

It will remain an active member of the Brussels based HRDN, in Denmark with framework organisations under the Danish Arab Partnership Programme; and it will seek ways to reinforce cooperation between organisations that are active on regional agendas including the European organisations that increased their presence in the region after the revolutions. In addition it will continue to conduct formal and informal consultations with its associate members, the international human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, FIDH and the OMCT.

It will also pursue its close cooperation with the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Support of Human Rights Defenders in the different countries where both the EMHRF and the EMHRN are active.

As mentioned above, the region is witnessing the upcoming of a new generation of civil society actors and a renewal of existing organisations. It is crucial for EMHRN's sustainability and impact that it is able itself to ensure renewal of the membership and to recruit new members so that the EMHRN remains representative of the most significant human rights initiatives on the ground.

The 2015 GA adoption of amendments to the EMHRN Statutes regarding members will facilitate the process of renewal of EMHRN membership. The EMHRN will also seek to implement an EC decision from 2013 to identify necessary human resources enabling it to proactively recruit new members dealing with EMHRN priority themes. It will pay particular attention to attracting members in countries where the Network is weakly represented or has no members.

## E. GENDER MAINSTREAMING

An important part of the EMHRN's work method is to promote gender equality through gender mainstreaming initiatives. The EMHRN will continue to promote gender mainstreaming principles, including equal participation and representation of men and women in EMHRN bodies and activities as well as among the membership. It will furthermore develop methods to ensure that gender specific human rights issues are high-lighted in EMHRN documents, reports and statements, as well as in the activities of its thematic working groups and solidarity groups.. The EMHRN will continue to undertake regular audits evaluating the results of its gender mainstreaming efforts and support gender mainstreaming initiatives among members based on the needs expressed in a survey conducted among members in 2014/15, the results of which were analysed in the gender audit presented to the GA in 2015.

Finally, the EMHRN will continue the process of identifying and adopting at least one member organisation per country with women's rights and gender equality expertise.

## F. EVALUATION

Over the past two years the secretariat worked systematically to develop internal monitoring and evaluation tools for EMHRN work, setting-up result aims, indicators of achievement, and means of verification of these as well as linking internal management monitoring and evaluation to result frameworks for donors. It also developed the systematic use of evaluation sheets to assess the outcome and results of larger missions and meetings. The Secretariat will consolidate the use of these instruments over the next three years making them an integral part of its work. It will also strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of its gender responsiveness, by including and working with gender specific indicators in the above mentioned evaluation tools. This will allow it to better assess best practices and challenges to its work, and improving result reporting to donors.

**In general the results/ achievements of EMHRN activities will be measured on the following basis:**

- » The extent to which the EMHRN enabled its members and partners to meet, network, strategize and conduct joint actions, including monitoring, documentation, solidarity and advocacy on human rights standards and violations.
- » The extent to which EMHRN members benefit in their daily activities from engaging in EMHRN networking activities.
- » The extent to which EMHRN capacity building activities have enabled the members and partners work (on advocacy, documentation, fund raising, promotion of gender equality etc.).
- » The extent to which EMHRN monitoring, documentation and communication work has been conducive to protecting members or partners at risk or under attack.
- » The extent to which EMHRN advocacy and communication work reaches and is taken into account by decision makers in the region.
- » Specific outcomes and results will be drafted for the EMHRN's specific activities, as well as indicators – including gender specific indicators - and means of verification thereof.
- » The EMHRN will also carefully study the recommendations of an external system evaluation that will be conducted by SIDA and DANIDA in 2015 and that is expected to be concluded shortly after the General Assembly.

## 5. Organisational Issues

### A. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The EMHRN is a member based organisation with over 15% of its members being represented in the Executive Committee while up to 30% run for the GA elections to the board. Together with the General Assembly the EMHRN's Executive Committee (EC) plays an irreplaceable role in the delivery and supervision of EMHRN's actions as the EC members take active part in and advises on EMHRN policies within their field of responsibility. The President, Vice President, Treasurer and Political Referent for gender further constitutes a 'Quartet' that prepares EC meetings, and oversees the practical and organisational aspects of the Secretariat's work.

The EC is elected by the members to implement the decisions of the General Assembly, including overseeing the work of the Secretariat, and to conduct EMHRN actions between Assembly meetings. This implies that it is mandated to take public stands on events and political developments that may fall outside some EMHRN members' remit or that would not necessarily meet consensus by all members.

The EMHRN will continue to ensure that the EC is provided with the necessary resources to conduct its work including meeting three times a year as stipulated by the Statutes. The venues of the meeting will be decided by the EC according to political and organisational priorities and will be occasions to meet with local EMHRN members and partners as well as relevant decision makers. The EC will also continue to strive to include an equal number of men and women, as stipulated by the EMHRN Statutes.

## B. THE SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat of the EMHRN has in the past years gone through a significant restructuring including the establishment of an Administration, Finances and Human Resources Department, as well as a communication department. Furthermore, it reduced the number of offices from 7 to 5; currently in Copenhagen, Brussels, Paris, Amman and Tunis and the Tunis office is gradually being built up as a sub-regional office for the Maghreb. Due to lack of financial resources and due to the political environment the EMHRN did not manage yet turning the Amman office into a sub-regional office for the Mashrek.

Also, by adopting the EMHRN's 2012-18 strategy the members suggested that the EMHRN should further professionalise its capacity building activities and recruit in-house pedagogical expertise to develop specific EMHRN training courses/ training modules on issues of relevance to its members.

However, the EMHRN did not yet manage to identify the necessary resources to establish a training unit within the Secretariat, but will pursue efforts in that sense over the next three years and combine it with its objective of strengthening relations with potentially new members.

An important objective over the next three years will thus be to identify the necessary resources to establish a Mashrek office and a training unit and in this way complete the restructuring it initiated during the past activity period.

The Secretariat today consists of highly qualified staff with expertise within their field of specialisation. The EMHRN aims at consolidating this, amongst other by maintaining solid recruitment procedures and updating staff regulations. It will continue applying an equal opportunity principles when hiring staff and continue implementing staff development policies in order to strengthen the professional development of individual staff members. The EMHRN will stay committed to the creation and strengthening of both a working environment and a corporate culture that respects gender parity, equal representation at all levels of decision making, equal opportunity, as well as equal distribution of resources for women and men according to their respective duties within the EMHRN. It will also finalise the revision of its security policy to ensure maximum safety for staff and other EMHRN stakeholders working on behalf of the Network.

## C. FUNDING

**In 2013 the Executive Committee approved a funding strategy for the EMHRN covering 2013 to 2016. Its main elements are to:**

- » Ensure the EMHRN's independence: the EMHRN will accept funds from public and private donors when they sustain activities that fall within the EMHRN's remit, strategy plan and work programme, and only insofar as the EMHRN's right to freely express its opinions and policies is respected, and no political conditions are set by the donors.
- » Minimise the EMHRN's donor dependence: The EMHRN aims at being in a financial position where one donor never funds more than one third of EMHRN total activities.
- » Ensure the financial sustainability: The EMHRN aims at developing reserve funds, when accepted by the donors, that can be used during transition periods when funding is scarce.

Hence, the main goal over the next years is to 1) maintain close and constructive relations with EMHRN core donors; 2) seek to increase the number of donors in order to ensure maximum sustainability of the EMHRN. In addition the EMHRN will seek to diversify the number of project donors in order to enable specific projects of the EMHRN to run on by their own means.

The EMHRN should also seek to increase its reserve funds by not discarding the possibility of carrying out income generating activities should the possibility arise without compromising the independence and mandate of the EMHRN.







Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network  
Réseau Euro-méditerranéen des droits de l'Homme  
الشبكة الأوروبية-المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان