



EuroMed Rights 10th General Assembly Report

Brussels, 12-14 June 2015



EuroMed Rights – Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
EuroMed Droits – Réseau euro-méditerranéen des droits humain
الأورو-متوسطية للحقوق – الشبكة الأوروبية المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

August 2015

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Bibliographic information

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Publisher: EuroMed Rights

Date of initial publication: September 2015

Pages: 28

Original Language: English

Editing, corrections and revisions:

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The 10th EuroMed Rights' General Assembly was organised with the financial support of DAPP and SIDA



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Introduction

On 12-14 June 2015, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EuroMed Rights) convened its 10th General Assembly in Brussels. All the regular, associate and honorary members of the Network were invited, as well as external observers such as partner NGOs, EU representatives, researchers, journalists and EuroMed Rights' donors. More than 120 participants gathered at the Renaissance Hotel Brussels to attend the event.

The gathering of all the EuroMed Rights' members was also an opportunity for the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders to hold its 4th Consultation of the Council of Representatives on 13 June.

This report details the discussions held during EuroMed Rights' General Assembly, where the Network's Activity Report, Financial Reports, Work Programme for 2015-2017 and proposed amendments to statutes were presented, debated and voted on. This report also contains the result of the vote on new members, a new Executive Committee and Presidency. In addition, the report includes a summary of the discussions from the three workshops organised in the framework of the General Assembly, which focused on borders, militarisation of the region, and future EU policies towards its Southern Neighbourhood. Finally, the report includes the Resolution passed at the conclusion of the EuroMed Rights' General Assembly.

1. Opening of the General Assembly

The 10th General Assembly was opened by EuroMed Rights' President, Michel Tubiana, in Brussels on Friday 12 June.

Unanimously, the General Assembly adopted the meeting programme (see annex), elected the Assembly Bureau/Declaration Committee - composed of Françoise Brié, Wadih Al-Asmar, Tarek Ben Hiba and Michel Tubiana - and elected the designated vote counters for the election of the new Executive Committee and Presidency.

Following these favourable votes, Michel Tubiana welcomed Stavros Lambrinidis, the European Union's Special Representative for Human Rights, Azza Soliman, lawyer and founder of the Center for Egyptian Women Legal Aid, and Kamel Jendoubi, Honorary President of EuroMed Rights and current Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister of Tunisia. These three important human rights figures honoured the Network by addressing the General Assembly.



Opening Session: Azza Soliman (CEWLA), Michel Tubiana (EuroMed Rights' President), Stavros Lambrinidis (EU SR for Human Rights), and Kamel Jendoubi (Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister, Tunisia)

Stavros Lambrinidis began by thanking EuroMed Rights for the fruitful collaboration he has with the Network. He went on to highlight the importance of education, as it gives both a political voice and economic power to people. In this regard, he stressed the importance of civil society and deplored the threats they face from state actors who seek to isolate them and delegitimise their work. These attacks must be opposed and rejected. Moreover, state actors have recently increased the monitoring of international funds received by civil society under the pretext of fighting terrorism. Mr. Lambrinidis agreed on the fact that, while governments have the right to demand transparency with regard to funding, this transparency must be accompanied by strict rules. Without a legal framework, transparency can be used as an excuse to stifle freedom of assembly, association and expression. Finally, he reported that those who oppose collaboration between civil society and the European Union have resorted to the fallacious argument that human rights are culturally relative. He insisted on the universality of human rights and asserted that this issue was one of his and the EU's strongest commitments.

Following this first speech, Azza Soliman gave an overview of the current human rights situation in Egypt. She deplored the significant deterioration of human rights in the country, as exemplified by the investigation conducted into the work of the Cairo Institute of Human Right Studies. This investigation illustrates the broader ongoing crack-down on civil society, and especially human rights organisations. This situation has severe consequences: many human rights activists are detained and sentenced to years in prison, many others are banned from travelling, while there has also been an increase in cases of forced disappearances, arbitrary detention and murder. Azza Soliman is currently being prosecuted because of her role as a witness to Shaima al-Sabbagh's shooting. She called for increased support to be given to the country's civil society; this support is necessary to strengthen the efforts of Egyptian youths seeking to put their country on the path to democracy.

The last to take the floor was Kamel Jendoubi, Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister of Tunisia and Honorary President of EuroMed Rights. He expressed how proud and moved he was to be at the General Assembly. He reminded participants that human rights defenders risk losing their freedom in their fight for democracy, as was the case for Mr. Mazen Darwish in Syria. Mr. Jendoubi condemned the deterioration of human rights throughout the MENA region after the Arab uprisings. He then proceeded to focus on Tunisian situation, where the country is faced with two major challenges: terrorism and a deeply concerning economic and social context. In his opinion, the terrorist attack at the Bardo targeted Tunisia's civilization, young democracy, and hospitality. Nevertheless, he was proud to observe that the attack did not have the desired effect, and instead brought the Tunisian people together in support of human rights and democracy. On that matter, he stressed that it was imperative not to compromise human rights for the sake of security concerns and appealed to the international community and the EU to push in this direction. To this end, the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is unable to adequately respond to the situation in Mediterranean countries and must be extensively revised. He concluded by calling for stronger support to be given to the Tunisian democratisation process, which has important repercussions for the region as a whole.

2. Assessing the Past

On Friday 12 June, President Michel Tubiana opened the floor with the President's report. This was followed by a presentation of the EuroMed Rights' Gender Audit by Gender Programme Officer, Sarah Gjerding. Finally, the Activity Report 2012-2014 was presented by EuroMed Rights' Executive Director, Marc Schade-Poulsen, followed by the Financial reports presented by Treasurer, Moataz El Feghery.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Michel Tubiana, President of EuroMed Rights, began by expressing his solidarity with the Network's Palestinian members from Gaza, who were unable to attend the General Assembly as they were prevented by the Israeli authorities from leaving Gaza in time for the General Assembly. He drew the participants' attention to the intolerable recurrence of these restrictions on the right to movement in the region.

Michel Tubiana then presented an overview of the human rights situation across the Mediterranean. He deplored the deterioration of the human rights situation in Egypt where human rights defenders currently face serious threats. The Syrian situation and the numerous atrocities Syrian civilians are enduring were also discussed. On this critical issue, Michel Tubiana noted that, "In Syria, women, children, men are killed, raped, or humiliated either by a dictatorship or by extremists." He continued: "This suffering is ours. It belongs to us, we carry it. Not as the misery of the world but as a will to revolt." In this respect, he strongly rejected arguments regarding the cultural relativity of human rights.

Considering the recent serious human rights violations in the region, he admitted that, at first sight, the Arab revolutions could be considered a failure. However he encouraged the participants to analyse them in a global perspective. These

revolutions involved children, women and men fighting for the sake of democracy. They discussed, gathered in the streets and raised their voices together as citizens, which in itself is invaluable. However, he deplored the European response to these crises, which was guided by economic interests rather than democratic values. He drew the participants' attention to the EU's migration policies, which have led to the death of thousands of people at sea.

He encouraged participants to unequivocally uphold human rights and continue to promote them, to welcome new movements - particularly those movements fighting for women rights - and to support Tunisia's new democracy.

Michel Tubiana concluded by thanking the Executive Committee members for their strong commitment. He then highlighted the launch of EuroMed Rights' new website and noted that the Network needs to continue its efforts to strengthen its external communication.

The moral report was unanimously approved by the General Assembly on 12 June

GENDER AUDIT

The Gender Audit was presented by EuroMed Rights' Gender Programme Officer, Sarah Gjerding. She began by presenting the methodology employed and the purpose of the 2015 Gender Audit. She then presented the current regional context with regards to gender equality, both in Europe (economic crises and austerity measures) and in the south of the Mediterranean (Arab uprisings). These developments have had severe repercussions on the social and economic rights of women and placed the role of women at the heart of societal debates.

Following this introduction, she presented the audit results and discussed the way forward. The main recommendation was for EuroMed Rights to capitalise and facilitate the exchange of experiences and best practices among members in order for

the Network to become a “gender resource hub”. Concerning recommendations for members, these included continuing to gender mainstream their work and striving towards collecting gender disaggregated data. A final recommendation was for members to support men’s active involvement in promoting gender equality, both at the organisational and programme levels.

Finally, she discussed the implementation of the recommendations. An Action Plan will be prepared to ensure the implementation of the EuroMed Rights’ Gender Equality Policy Paper as well as the recommendations from the Gender Audit. This process will involve both the new Executive Committee and the new political referent for the gender programme. In addition, a gender mainstreaming “package” for the thematic and country Working Groups will be prepared in order to strengthen gender equality within the work of the Working Groups.

ACTIVITY REPORT AND FINANCIAL REPORTS 2012, 2013, 2014

The Activity Report 2012-2014 was presented by EuroMed Rights Executive Director Marc Schade-Poulsen. Mr. Schade-Poulsen started by sharing with participants his concerns regarding the geopolitical situation of the Mediterranean region.

Following this introduction, he confirmed that, overall, the recommendations and Strategy adopted at the 2012 General Assembly had been implemented (strengthening of partnerships, consolidation of EuroMed Rights’ regional work, increased advocacy capacities of members, etc.). He also highlighted the increased work of EuroMed Rights at the national level, which had also been recommended during the 2012 General Assembly. Another important line of work has been the restructuring of the Secretariat so as to facilitate its growth and increase its efficiency; he noted that this restructuring was nearing completion. He ended his report by thanking the Executive Committee, the staff and the donors for making all this work possible.

This presentation was followed by a presentation of the Financial Report by EuroMed Rights Treasurer, Moataz El Fegjery. He presented three important documents: the annual Financial Reports for 2012-2014, the 2001-2014 Financial Results and the 2012-2014 Budget. Following these presentations he thanked the donors and the EuroMed Rights staff.

The presentation of the Activity Report 2012-2014 and the Financial Reports 2012-2014 was concluded by a discussion in plenary session. The participants brought forward concerns and remarks, including that the Network should:

- » Either make tangible advancements in its work on social and economic rights or remove it from the Work Programme;
- » Increase its work on the Syrian situation and on the rights of Syrian refugees;
- » Increase its coverage of the situation in Algeria and Egypt;
- » Develop its monitoring and evaluation programme;
- » Further develop its external and internal communication.

The Activity Report 2012-2014 and the Financial Reports 2012-2014 were unanimously approved by the General Assembly on 12 June.

3. Preparing for the Future

This chapter focuses on the future of the Network. On Saturday 13 June, participants were called upon to discuss and reflect on the planning documents for the upcoming years, vote on the accession of new members, and elect a new EuroMed Rights' Executive Committee and Presidency. The statutes of the Network were revised by the General Assembly on 14 June.

ADOPTION OF A NEW WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET 2015-2017

On the second day of the General Assembly, the first session focused on the Work Programme and Budget for 2015-2017. This session was presented by Executive Director Marc Schade-Poulsen.

As reported during the session, the Work Programme 2015-2017 contained no major changes as regards the themes and countries on which the Network will focus. However, it was highlighted that the Network will be strengthening its work at the national level in order to adapt to developments in the region.

The national and bi-lateral level programme was introduced:

- » **Algeria:** increased protection of human rights defenders and organisations;
- » **Egypt:** development of a protection programme with advocacy and trial monitoring elements to support Egyptian human rights activists and their organisations;
- » **Libya:** protection and strengthening of Libyan civil society and advocacy at the EU and UN levels;
- » **Palestine, Israel and the Palestinians:** fighting impunity, combatting the separation policy (Gaza and settlements), and supporting prisoners' rights;
- » **Syria:** increased capacity of Syrian human rights groups and activists to document human rights violations, promote accountability for human rights violations, and conduct advocacy;
- » **Tunisia:** strengthening of the tripartite dialogue (EU/government/civil society) and capacity building of Tunisian civil society.

Marc Schade-Poulsen emphasised that the regional work would not be neglected in favour of that at the national level. Regional work is at the core of the EuroMed Rights' existence and will remain so in the future. In order to build a stronger regional programme, the Network aims to focus on issues that have a direct political resonance in both the South and North.

More precisely, the Network suggested six regional thematic priorities:

- » Economic and social rights;
- » Rights of migrants and refugees;
- » Fight against discrimination, including freedom of conscience, and the right of minorities;
- » Gender equality and women's rights;
- » Rule of law;
- » Enabling environment for civil society work.

He concluded by presenting the methodology to be employed and the budget allocated for these priorities.

The debate that followed was facilitated by Ishai Menuchi, Executive Director of the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), and gave members the opportunity to share their thoughts on the Work Programme.

Several issues were raised by the participants, including:

- » The need for visibility, coordination and cooperation between the work of different Working Groups;
- » The importance of cross-cutting training for each Working Group on transversal issues, i.e. on the question of impunity and on gender;
- » The necessity of a balance in the budget between thematic and country approach;



Debate in the plenary

On the morning of Sunday 14 June 2015, the Work Programme 2015-2017 and the budget related thereto, were unanimously adopted by the General Assembly.

ADOPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

The adoption of the new members of EuroMed Rights took place on Friday 12 June. Representatives of the nine applicant organisations introduced themselves to the General Assembly. The eight regular organisations and the associate organisation applying for membership were formally welcomed as new members by the General Assembly.*

Regular National Members

- » Center for Legal Aid - Voice in Bulgaria, Bulgaria
- » Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux, Tunisia
- » Helsinki Citizens' Assembly, Turkey
- » La Ligue de l'Enseignement, France
- » Syndicat National Autonome des Personnels de l'administration Publique (SNAPAP), Algeria
- » Syrian Human Rights Organization (SWASIAH), Syria

Associate Member

- » International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)

The General Assembly then took note of the fact that the following organisations had either ceased their cooperation with the EuroMed Rights, ceased all activities related to the fields of work and objectives set out in the EuroMed Rights' Statutes, or did not honour their financial obligations towards EuroMed Rights:

- » Regular members: Conseil National pour les Libertés en Tunisie (CNLT), Tunisia; Centre for Media Freedom (CMF MENA), Morocco; Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des droits de l'Homme (LADH), Algeria; The Libyan League for Human Rights, Libya; Rene Moawad Foundation, Lebanon; Rights and Freedom Association, Cyprus.

*Two organisations are not mentioned for security reasons.

» Associate members: Penal Reform International, UK; Euro-Arab Dialogue from Below, Netherlands; International Service for Human Rights, Switzerland; Iraqi Human Rights Association (IHRS), Denmark; Article 19 International Centre Against Censorship, UK; Foundation for International Studies, University of Malta, Malta.

ELECTION OF EUROMED RIGHTS' EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PRESIDENT



Members voting for their new President and a new Executive Committee

Elections for the new Executive Committee and Presidency were held on Saturday 13 June. 56 regular members registered and voted in the elections. The electoral committee was composed of Marie Lavrentiadou, President of the Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity (EEDDA); Lilia Rebai, Project Coordinator EU-Tunisia Project; and Vincent Forest, Advocacy Director.

Six representatives from member organisations in the North and six representatives from member organisations in the South were elected - corresponding to seven men and five women - as follows:

ORGANISATION	CANDIDATE	COUNTRY
MEDITERRANEAN PARTNER COUNTRIES OF THE EU		
Association démocratique des femmes du Maroc (ADFM)	Nabia HADDOUCHE	Morocco
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)	Moataz EL FEGIERY	Egypt
Centre Libanais Des Droits Humains (CLDH)	Wadih AL-ASMAR	Lebanon
Forum Tunisien pour les Droits Economiques et Sociaux	Messaoud ROMDHANI	Tunisia
Human Rights Association (IHD)	Osman IŞÇI	Turkey
The Palestinian Center for Human Rights	Hamdi SHAQQURA	Palestine
EU MEMBER COUNTRIES		
ACSUR	Isaías BARREÑADA	Spain
Arci – Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana	Raffaella BOLINI	Italy
Association Européenne pour la défense des Droits de l'Homme	Catherine TEULE	Regional/Belgium
DIGNITY	Søs NISSEN	Denmark
TAPRI - Mediterranean Studies Project, Tampere Peace Research Institute, University of Tampere	Anitta KYNSILEHTO	Finland
EUROMED RIGHTS' PRESIDENT		
La Ligue des droits de l'Homme	Michel Tubiana	France

REVISION OF THE STATUTES

The revision of EuroMed Rights' Statutes took place on Sunday 14 June. Michel Tubiana began by presenting the voting procedures for the adoption or rejection of amendments. This was followed by a fruitful debate on almost 30 amendments proposed by the Executive Committee.

The main modifications approved by the members are the following:

- » The name of the Network was changed to EuroMed Rights – Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network;
- » Under certain circumstances, EuroMed Rights will financially support the efforts of its members. This support has to be seen as exceptional and requires the support of two thirds of the members of the Executive Committee;
- » The duration of the term of the President is limited to two consecutive terms. Michel Tubiana insisted on the retroactivity of this amendment, which means that the current President is serving his last term;
- » It was agreed that, at each General Assembly, the Executive Committee will submit a special report detailing any changes with respect to membership, including resignations, expulsions or exclusions, that may have occurred since the last General Assembly;
- » The General Assembly deleted the clause concerning the requirement for contract and funding requests to be concluded and signed by the Executive Director with the concurrence of the Treasurer and the President (for contracts exceeding 30.000€).



The new Executive Committee (without Hamdi Shaqqura who was prevented from participating in the General Assembly)

The main modifications that did not obtain the required support of two thirds of the members were the following:

- » The set of amendments transferring membership adoption competency to the Executive Committee for a faster inclusion of prospective members was rejected. The proposed amendment in relation to the creation of a conflict committee was also rejected. This committee was conceived as a formal institution mandated to receive and deliberate on possible conflicts concerning membership. This package of amendments was rejected by the members as it was argued that it would unnecessarily increase the power of the Executive Committee.

4. Recommendations for the Future - Presentation of the three Workshops

On Saturday 13 June, three workshops were organised focusing on key elements of EuroMed Rights' work: the question of borders, the militarisation of the region, and future policies of the EU towards its Southern Neighbourhood. This was an occasion for speakers and participants to exchange information and views on these issues. The discussions, comments and recommendations expressed in the three workshops were reported back in a plenary session on Sunday 14 June and were welcomed as inputs to the Work Programme.

WORKSHOP 1: MULTIPLE BORDERS: DEATH, ENCOUNTERS AND ACCESS TO RIGHTS

The objective of this workshop was to present and discuss, from a human rights perspective, how borders affect the rights of migrants and refugees in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

Three presentations were given focusing, respectively, on a European border, a Southern border, and the Mediterranean Sea/EU border.

Radostina Pavlova (Center for Legal Aid - Voice of Bulgaria) raised several issues concerning Bulgaria's legislative, policy and protection frameworks vis-a-vis migrants and refugees attempting to enter the country. For instance, she stressed the role of physical as well as nonphysical borders and the countless human rights violations that are taking place. In light of this situation, she emphasised the need for civil society to be present at border crossings to monitor the situation and the urgent need to request more transparency from the government on this matter.

Rachid Malaoui (SNAPAP) presented EuroMed Rights' Maghnia report on the human rights violations at the Algerian/Moroccan border. He outlined the vulnerability of refugees and migrants in Algeria, stressing that Sahrawi refugees, Palestinian refugees, as well as political refugees from Syria and Iraq are currently without any protection. These refugees have no access to work or housing, which limits their self-reliance and ability to provide for themselves. They are also vulnerable to arrest and lack access to basic rights. Algeria has been working on a new asylum law for the past four years but has yet to implement any national legislation on asylum nor put in place a functioning body to adjudicate asylum requests in Algeria. Migrant workers do not have access to trade unions, nor to family reunification. Irregular migrant workers - the majority coming from Sub-Saharan Africa - live in tents in ghettos outside the cities. They are very vulnerable and are often arrested and expelled to Oujda, on the other side of the border with Morocco.

Marie Martin, EuroMed Rights' Programme Officer, then discussed the EU's security-oriented migration policies. The EU has put in place cooperation mechanisms, such as Frontex, which focus first and foremost on border control while neglecting search and rescue operations. She explained how the EU is externalising its border control to third countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya through mobility partnerships and readmission agreements.

The audience firstly pointed out that the EU policies are transferring its de facto borders further to the south. This issue is illustrated by the fact that the Mauritanian borders are currently guarded by the Spanish border police with EU support. The discussion on this issue focused on how civil society can mobilise itself against

these externalisation policies, and the need to mobilise civil society on both sides of the Mediterranean in this regard.

Secondly, participants advocated for awareness-raising among local populations as well as increased lobbying of South and North governments to regularise irregular migrants and uphold their rights. More specifically, the participants called upon EuroMed Rights to work on promoting a positive vision of refugees and migrants at the communication level of its work.

Finally, the participants called for an increase of documentation on violations and for increased monitoring of the situation at the southern borders, as this information is essential for advocacy work on resettlement quotas of EU member states.

WORKSHOP 2: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE MILITARISATION OF POLITICS IN SOUTH OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

The workshop focused on the multi-layered consequences of militarisation in the South of the Mediterranean. It was introduced by Mario Abou Zeid, Research Analyst of the Carnegie Middle East Center, and Shawan Jabareen, General Director of Al Haq, Palestine.

Mario Abou Zeid's presentation introduced the local dynamics among the states in crises in the South Mediterranean. He firstly discussed the unparalleled level of militarisation that the MENA region is currently witnessing. The latest series of crises (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Libya) have had a widespread impact and have contributed to the rise of extremist Islamist groups. As he explained, these extremist organisations are filling the vacuums left by states and taking over political and social structures. As a reaction to the rise of these groups, governments are using violence with self-defeating results. He deplored the consequences of this approach, which contributes to further destabilisation, human rights abuses and massive population displacement. He then focused on the Syrian crisis, which has produced an enor-

mous refugee population dependent on external aid. This unstable population has been targeted by religious activist organisations disseminating their views on Islam. He stated that the initial source of the conflict was not military but socio-political; with this in mind he emphasised the need for states to focus on rebuilding national institutions rather than dissolving them. Inclusion of all stakeholders, including civil society, is key in order to shape a new social contract in these countries.

Following this first presentation, Shawan Jabareen described the current situation in the MENA region from a human rights perspective. In his opinion, one of the main roots of the current conflicts is the failure of the state to deal democratically with its citizens and construct a notion of citizenship based on dignity and freedoms. Additionally, the driving forces of the current crises have to be analysed at an international level. These conflicts require us to take a step back and consider the political and economic actors surreptitiously involved. The arms and weapons industry benefits significantly from the mass killings and on-going violence. It is no coincidence that the MENA region has become a conflict zone in light of the financial opportunities presented by its oil supply and the desire of its governments to purchase arms and weapons. He advocated for a democratic and political solution rather than the current military one, which has allowed dictatorships to resort to violence under the pretext of fighting terrorism. He concluded by encouraging participants to focus their efforts on engaging with civil society and engaging public opinion globally on this issue. He encouraged participants and the Network to uphold universal values of human rights at the international and local levels in order to achieve a meaningful political resolution to these conflicts. As a final point, he called on the Network to clearly state that militarisation and weaponisation are contributing to crimes on the ground, and that the only possible solution must be sought on political and democratic grounds.

These presentations gave rise to varied and lively discussions.

The debate started with the crucial question of whether or not the Syrian opposition should be armed. There was no consensus on this subject: on one hand, civilians are the first to be harmed, while on the other hand, not arming the opposition allows religious extremists to fill the void, which leads to even more destruction.

However, everyone agreed that it was now too late and that these parties should not be armed at the moment.

Secondly, the role of the international community was discussed. At the beginning of the conflict, activists on the ground were calling on the United Nations and the International Criminal Court to act, but they are now totally disillusioned with these actors. In this regard, Shawan Jabareen argued for the need to mobilise public opinion rather than rely on the official international community. Knowing the importance of the arms industry in the USA, it is important to consider the financial interests the industry has in these conflicts. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey were also singled out during the debate for the negative role they are playing in these regional conflicts.

In conclusion, participants brought forward several suggestions for solutions to facilitate peaceful processes in this region. They expressed a need for reflection, proposals and tangible actions to come from civil society. Civil society organisations need to work on long term solutions and propose alternatives and viable political solutions for rebuilding states and their institutions. They also called for increased investment in education, as education is the only way to develop mechanisms for coexistence. This particular question has to be further analysed and translated into tangible actions by member organisations and the Network.

WORKSHOP 3: ENP REVISION: HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST!

This workshop aimed at examining the European Neighbourhood Policy, which is the EU's main foreign relations instrument with its Southern neighbours.

The workshop started with a presentation by Erwan Lannon, Professor of Ghent University, on the revision of the ENP. The ENP was first drafted by the European Commission in 2004 and revised in 2011 and 2015. During the 2011 revision, new principles were introduced; these principles focused on the democratic processes of the EU's ENP partners, as set out in the "support progress towards deep democracy principle". The EU definition of democracy was linked to the EU's political and

economic accession criteria, i.e. "the Copenhagen Criteria": free and fair elections; freedom of association, an independent judiciary, etc. As underlined by Erwan Lannon, this democratic conditionality has to be questioned in view of the different standards the EU applies to EU member states and to neighbouring countries. These different standards have a serious effect on the credibility of the EU and its policies. The ENP incentive-based "more for more" approach was then discussed. This approach was created in order to incentivise neighbourhood countries willing to undertake political reforms and respect human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. He argued that this approach has to be translated into tangible actions.

The workshop continued with a presentation by Thomas Seiler, Policy officer of the ENP team. Thomas Seiler started with a brief introduction to the EU Commission consultation paper and the main principles set in the document: differentiation; focus; flexibility and ownership. Two main points came out of the feedback and contributions received by the European External Action Service from partner countries, stakeholders and civil society organisations : firstly the need to differentiate and tailor the ENP to each country, and secondly the need to integrate more security-related issues into the ENP. In addition, member states are calling for a more political ENP. This point of view was shared by Thomas Sailor, who was in favour of dedicating a larger part of the ENP Progress Report to political aspects, including an analysis of the human rights situation. Based on this, the European External Action Service (EEAS) may suggest that the ENP be incorporated into the EU's foreign policy. He finally reported the need to clarify with EU delegations on the ground how best to engage with civil society organisations and to invest in a more political communication of the ENP process.

The last presentation was by Vincent Forest, EuroMed Rights' Advocacy Director. He pointed out the transversal problem with the ENP's approach to human rights. He emphasised the importance of interpreting the four principles of the ENP (differentiation, focus, flexibility, and ownership) from a human rights perspective, and the importance of including civil society organisations as key partners. The "differentiation" principle and the importance of maintaining the human rights conditionality element within it was particularly discussed. It would be worthwhile for the EU to identify key areas where conditionality could have an added value.

The bare minimum should be to ensure the EU is not supporting those responsible of human rights violations. An additional principle was suggested by the EuroMed Rights' Advocacy team: the need for coherence between the ENP and other EU instruments and policies, as well as between EU and member state policies. Vincent Forest concluded by encouraging the EU to broaden its regional approach beyond the ENP. Crucial points to focus on are: 1) developing a human rights strategy for Southern countries, 2) developing a human rights approach to migration, and 3) including systematic impact assessments in its Free Trade Agreements.



Workshop 3: ENP revision: Human Rights first!

Following the three presentations, the debate focused mainly on the engagement of civil society and the human rights conditionality principle of “more for more”.

The lack of integration of civil society in decision-making was identified by the participants of the workshop as constituting one of the main problems of the ENP. The EU must increase their engagement with civil society. The mobilisation of civil society organisations could be a way forward to ensure a country's transition to a democratic society and effective monitoring of the democratic process.

It was also noted that, since the Barcelona process, each revision of the ENP has resulted in decreasing importance being given to the human rights dimension.

Accordingly, recommendations include the following: increased flexibility, more consistent and coherent human rights conditionality and an increased involvement of civil society. Moreover, the differentiated and flexible approach should include incentives and penalties with regard to the “more for more” principles that are linked to human rights and democracy. It should be applied uniformly and not only to a few issues related to EU migration and commercial policies.

At the end of the session, EuroMed Rights' Advocacy team offered to prepare a reply to the questions in the EU consultation paper based on the workshop discussion.

5. Taking a Stand

At the conclusion of the three-day meeting, the General Assembly issued a declaration on key issues of concern to the Network and its members.

ADOPTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DECLARATION

The Executive Committee prepared a first draft of the declaration. Then, the Assembly Bureau/ Declaration Committee composed of Francoise Bri , Wadih Al Asmar, Tarek Ben Hiba and Michel Tubiana convened on Friday 12 June 2015 to discuss the feedback and comments received from participants. A second draft of the declaration was then submitted to the plenary on 14 June for discussion and debate. After important contributions from the participants, the following final resolution was voted and adopted (1 vote against). The declaration was released on 16 June on the EuroMed Right' website.



Voting on the adoption of the General Assembly Declaration

10th General Assembly: Final Resolution

We, members of the Euro-Mediterranean civil society, declare that:

The creation of the Union for the Mediterranean to replace the Barcelona Process and the revolutions that shook the Middle East and North Africa and their repercussions, along with Israel's continued illegal occupation, settlement construction and land annexation in Palestine and Golan Heights, have emerged as major features in the Euromed region. The brutality of the regimes in Iraq and Syria as well as that of armed groups such as the so-called 'Islamic State', the growing militarisation of the entire region, particularly in Libya, and dictatorship rule being installed in countries like Egypt further reinforce the dire need for democracy.

The Union for the Mediterranean is based on major economic projects and gives little consideration to civil society and peoples' aspirations for democracy and economic and social justice that the revolutions have brought to the forefront since 2011. With the complicity of the regimes in these countries, the Union for the Mediterranean approach is based on investment, large construction projects and trade liberalisation to the detriment of a holistic approach to the countries of the region and their equitable development. South of the Mediterranean, millions of people, including women and youth, have taken great risks to demand dignity and freedom. Despite the outcome of these movements, their voices have been heard.

In the meantime, repressive policies led by these challenged regimes have proved noxious; silenced civil society, inability to bring about meaningful political alternatives, dismal socio-economic conditions, dashed hopes and, in some instances, a return to past situations, etc.

The European Union (EU) is experiencing an unprecedented economic crisis giving rise to austerity measures that have been largely rejected by its citizens. This has taken its toll on the democratic processes in these societies, as it has been accompanied by restrictions on freedoms and a surge in xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Obsessed with security concerns, the EU is closing in on itself, shockingly turning the Mediterranean into a graveyard, as far as asylum seekers are concerned.

In this context:

Priority must be given to protecting human rights activists as they are vital for the future, as well as empowering civil society to take ownership of human rights.

Incorporating in our actions and demands concrete gender equality measures, including combatting all forms of violence against women, is essential to make the change that we aspire to.

Building bridges between civil societies north and the south of the Mediterranean is an absolute necessity if we are to have any impact on policies, both at the national and regional levels.

Enhancing civil society's efficiency through welcoming the movements brought about by the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa is vital to strengthen the exercise of citizenship.

We must strongly oppose all forms of human rights relativism and reaffirm the universality of rights as the outcome of a process of gradual individual and collective ownership, where national and cultural traditions naturally find their place, not against nor next to each other, but around a base of non-negotiable values. In this regard, protection of the rights of minorities of any kind is a requirement to respect pluralism.

Putting an end to the widespread double standards policies and building relations between the north and the south of the Mediterranean on the basis of development of common values rather than on the interest of only one of the parties is a prerequisite to the credibility of human rights as a universal set of values. Thus, the EU must focus on the peaceful resolution of all regional conflicts, whether in Western Sahara or in Palestine, within the framework of United Nations resolutions, especially on the right of return for refugees.

The Palestinian people continue to live under oppression and the fate of the Syrian people remains a shameful blemish on the conscience of humanity. As many activists have paid for their dedication to human rights with their lives and many continue to pay with their freedom, and as all peoples aspire to the same freedoms, the Network will continue to work for equal rights, accountability and justice in this part of the world.

6. Acknowledgment

At the closing of the General Assembly, the President took the opportunity to thank all the participants for the three days spent together, and all EuroMed Rights' members for their past work and the work to come.

It was also an occasion to warmly thank the retiring members of the Executive Committee - Alya Chérif Chammari, Eugenia Papamakariou, Nassera Dutour, Ayachi Hammami and Mahmoud AbuRahma - as well as the staff in Copenhagen, Brussels, Paris and Tunis, and the interpreters.

Last but not least, EuroMed Rights thanked the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme and SIDA for their important and generous financial support which made the successful organisation of the General Assembly possible.



General Assembly plenary

Michel Tubiana,
EuroMed Rights President

Marc Schade-Poulsen,
EuroMed Rights Executive Director

7. Annex:

Programme of the General Assembly

THURSDAY 11 JUNE

Evening **Participants arriving**

FRIDAY 12 JUNE

11.00-12.00 **Meeting of the interim Assembly Bureau/ Declaration Committee**

13.30-13.45 **Opening of the EMHRN General Assembly**

- » Adoption of the meeting Agenda
 - » Adoption of the Assembly Bureau/ Declaration Committee
 - » Election of Vote counters for the Executive Committee elections
- Chair: Michel Tubiana, EMHRN President, France

13.45-14.15 **Address to the General Assembly**

- » Stavros Lambridinis, EU Special Representative for Human Rights
 - » Kamel Jendoubi, Minister Delegate to the Prime Minister of Tunisia and Honorary President of the EMHRN
 - » Azza Soliman, Human Rights Lawyer and Founder of the Centre for Egyptian Women Legal Aid (CEWLA), Egypt
- Chair: Michel Tubiana, EMHRN President, France

14.15-15.45 **Presentation of Reports**

- » President's Report: Michel Tubiana, EMHRN President
 - » Gender audit: Sarah Gjerding, EMHRN Gender Programme Officer
 - » Activity Report: Marc Schade-Poulsen, EMHRN Executive Director
 - » Financial Reports 2012, 2013 and 2014: Moataz El Fegieri, EC member and EMHRN Treasurer
- Chair: Nassera Dutour, EMHRN Vice-President, Algeria

15.45-16.15 **Coffee break**

16.15-17.45 **Discussion of Reports**

Chairs: Mahmoud AbuRahma, EMHRN Executive Committee member, Palestine
Raffaella Bolini, EMHRN Executive Committee member, Italy

17.45-18.00 **Vote on Reports**
18.00-18.30 **Presentation of the new EMHRN members and vote on their membership**

Chairs: Osman İşçi, EMHRN Executive Committee member, Turkey
Søs Nissen, EMHRN Executive Committee member, Denmark

18.30-20.00 **Meeting of the Assembly Bureau/ Declaration Committee**

20:00 **Welcome dinner at the hotel**

SATURDAY 13 JUNE

09.00-09.30 **Presentation of the EMHRN Work programme 2015-17 and budget 2015-17**

Presentation: Marc Schade-Poulsen, EMHRN Executive Director
Chair: Moataz El Fegjery, Board Member, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, regional member

09.30-10.30 **Initial discussion of the EMHRN Work programme 2015-17 and budget 2015-17**

Chair: Ishai Menuchin, Executive Director, Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI), Israel

10.30-11.00 **Coffee break**

11.00-13.15 **3 Workshops:**

SUBJECT 1:

Multiple borders: Deaths, encounters and access to rights

Moderator: Anitta Kynsilehto, Senior Researcher, Tapri and Nordic Africa Institute

Speaker: Rachid Malaoui, President, SNAPAP, Algeria

Speaker: Dr Radostina Pavlova, Member of Governing Council, Center for Legal Aid - Voice of Bulgaria, Bulgaria

SUBJECT 2:

Human Rights and the Militarisation of Politics in South of the Mediterranean

Moderator: Søs Nissen, Program Leader MENA, Dignity, Denmark

Speaker: Mario Abou Zeid, Research Analyst, Carnegie Middle East Centre, Lebanon

Speaker: Shawan Jabareen, General Director, Al Haq, Palestine

SUBJECT 3:

ENP revision: Human rights first!

Moderator: Lamia Ghrar, Executive Director, Arab Institute for Human Rights Studies, Tunisia (tbc)

Speaker: Erwan Lannon, Professor University of Ghen, Belgium

Speaker: Vincent Forest, Advocacy Director, EMHRN

13.15-14.15

Lunch

14.15-15.00

Presentation of candidates for the Executive Committee & vote
(opening of voting boxes between 15.00 and 18.00)

Chair: Souhayr Belhassen, Honorary President, FIDH

15.00-15.30

Coffee break

15.30-17.30

4th Consultation of the Council of Representatives of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders (EMHRF)

19.00-20.30

(depart. 18.00)

Reception at the City Hall offered by the Head of Cabinet of Brussels Mayor, Mr Yvan Mayeur

SUNDAY 14 JUNE

09.00-09.15	Result of the Executive Committee elections Chair: Marie Lavrentiadou, EMHRN Honorary member, President of Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity (EEDDA), Greece	13.00-13.30	Closing of the General Assembly by the new President of the EMHRN Chair: EMHRN President
09.15-09.45	Reports from the 3 Workshops Chair: Nabia Haddouche, National President, Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), Morocco	13.30-14.30	Lunch
09.45-10.30	Discussion of the suggested amendments to the Statutes Presentation: Michel Tubiana, Honorary President, Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, France Chair: Lone Lindholt, EMHRN Honorary member, Denmark	13.30-14.00	Meeting of the new Executive Committee
10.30-11.00	Coffee break		
11.00-11.15	Votes on the EMHRN Work programme 2015-17 and budget 2015-17 Chair: Catherine Teule, Vice President, European Association for the Defence of Human Rights (AEDH), regional member		
11.15-11.30	Election of an Arbitration Committee Chair: Catherine Teule, Vice President, European Association for the Defence of Human Rights (AEDH)		
11.30-12.30	Adoption of the General Assembly Declaration Presentation: Michel Tubiana, Honorary President Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, France Chair: Wadih Al-Asmar, General Secretary, Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH), Lebanon		
12.30-13.00	Presentation of the EMHRN staff Chair: EMHRN President		



ANITTA KYNSILEHTO, EC Member



RAFFAELLA BOLINI, EC Member



MOATAZ EL FEGHERY, EC Member



OSMAN ISCI, EC Member



MESSAOUD ROMDHANI, EC Member



SOS NISSEN, EC Member



CATHERINE TEULE, EC Member



NABIA HADDOUCHE, EC Member



ISAÍAS BARREÑADA, EC Member



WADIH AL ASMAR, EC Member



EuroMed Rights – Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
EuroMed Droits – Réseau euro-méditerranéen des droits humains
الأورو-متوسطية للحقوق- الشبكة الأوروبية المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان