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RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

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REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

On 1-3 June 2012, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network convened its 9th General Assembly in Copenhagen on the occasion of its 15th anniversary. All the regular, associate and honorary members of the Network were invited as well as external observers such as partner NGOs, researchers, journalists or EMHRN donors. More than 120 participants gathered at the Tivoli Hotel & Congress Center to attend the event, preceded by a **EuroMed seminar on the challenges faced by the human rights movement**, organised by the EMHRN and held on 31 May and 1 June¹.

The gathering of all the EMHRN members was also an opportunity for the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders to hold its 3rd Council of Representatives meetings on 2 June in the afternoon.

On the evening before the opening of the General Assembly, the EMHRN was very pleased to welcome all the participants at a dinner in Copenhagen's famous amusement park Tivoli. This cheerful event was an opportunity for some of the founders of the EMHRN to speak to the dinner guests about the early days of the Network. Theocharis Papamargaris, Joe Stork, Said Essoulami and Bahey El Din Hassan thus shared their experiences, told stories about their challenges, fights and achievements together with the EMHRN in the past 15 years, and were warmly applauded by all the guests.



¹ The report of the EuroMed seminar is available on www.euromedrights.net

OPENING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The 9th General Assembly was opened by EMHRN President Kamel Jendoubi on Friday 1 June in the afternoon.

In the first part of the opening session, the General Assembly adopted the GA agenda, appointed a Steering Committee / GA final declaration Committee composed by the session chairpersons², and designated vote counters for the elections of the Executive Committee³.

In the second part of the opening session, the General Assembly had the honour to welcome **Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs Villy Søvndal** who congratulated the Network on its 15th anniversary. In his speech, Villy Søvndal welcomed the EMHRN's effort to promote the respect for human rights in Europe and the MENA region. He highlighted the fact that civil society had played a key role in the changes occurred in the region, and that even if progress had been made in terms of human rights and democracy, there was still a need for strong human rights NGOs. He also stressed that reaching peace, justice and development through the respect for human rights was a high priority for the Danish government and that Denmark would continue to support the Euro-Arab cooperation where human rights are a cornerstone.

Villy Søvndal ended his speech by wishing the EMHRN a successful General Assembly.

Kamel Jendoubi warmly thanked Denmark for having welcomed the EMHRN's headquarters in Copenhagen 15 years ago, and for its constant and selfless support since the very beginning of the Network's activities. He insisted on how grateful the EMHRN had been for Denmark's political and financial support while never interfering in its activities, which unfortunately is sometimes commonplace in other countries.

Kamel Jendoubi then addressed the audience in his last speech as EMHRN President:

“Dear friends, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Executive Committee, I wish to welcome you to the 9th General Assembly of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network. Allow me to take advantage of the privilege of officially opening the General Assembly, fifteen years after the inception of our Network, to tell you how proud I am to have had the honour to work with you and retain your trust during all those years despite the challenges we have been through both individually and collectively. For, lest we forget, we still have comrades languishing in the prisons of dictators or the occupant, while others are courageously fighting against repression, harassment, ill health and other torments they endure because of their action for human rights. This is the case of course in Syria, where men and women are going through agonies of mind and body, but also in all the Arab countries, in Palestine, in Israel. We need to remain alert and fully committed in order to wrest those victims from the clutches of torturers and murderers. We must continue to call for justice and work for peace. We must keep on working for democratic changes so that human rights, the rule of law and democracy are fully respected and enjoyed by everybody in the Euro-Mediterranean region. Fifteen years ago, it was probably easier for us, human rights defenders, to reflect on what to do and act accordingly. In those days, everything looked clear-cut and promising. Peace in the Middle East appeared within reach, the EuroMed Partnership was increasing hope for a better future based on peace and prosperity and there was then a public resolve to involve the civil society in the Partnership process. We believed there were good reasons to think we could do more in promoting human rights

² Kamel Jendoubi, Lone Lindholt, Wadih Al Asmar, Ishai Menuchin, Lubna Dawany, Serge Kollwelter, Souhayr Belhassen, Gerald Staberock, Søs Nissen, Michel Tubiana, Anna Bozzo.

³ Maria De Donato (Italian Refugee Council, CIR), Mouhieddine Cherbib (Committee for the Respect of Human Rights and Freedom in Tunisia, CRLDHT), Marc Schade-Poulsen (EMHRN).

through the establishment of links with partners supporting local actors at work on the ground. We became involved in this vision because we believed that the future of the countries and populations of the region was closely linked to the construction of Europe which could not proceed in a vacuum, unconcerned by surrounding world. Likewise, the economic and social development of the countries south and east of the Mediterranean required an unambiguous commitment to democracy that presumed both openness and full adherence to the human rights instruments and systems of reference. Thence the project to set up a human right and advocacy network regrouping both individuals and organizations joining their efforts for a common goal, which was changing the policies, legislations and programs in the fields and themes that we had prioritized for our mission and that was materialized through the work of our working groups. Our network acquired a strong identity and seek to adjust its pace and operation through greater involvement of its members as well as through information sharing, the fundamentals of a strong and cohesive network. Solidarity with human rights defenders was set as one of our top priority, a priority which was given concrete expression with the creation of the Euro-Mediterranean Foundation of Support to Human Rights Defenders, headed by my friend Driss El Yazami, and for which the human rights movement of the region takes great pride. Our Executive Director Marc Schade-Poulsen, with whom I have built a strong friendship, will present an overview of the activity report that highlights our achievements during the last three years. We must continue to ponder on how we could improve the operation and policies of the EMHRN to take into account the remarkable changes that the region has experienced in recent years. Indeed, that is what you will be called to discuss and validate when you will review the Strategy document, the product of a collective effort. I will not expand further but let me express the wish that the economic, social and cultural rights will become a priority line of work of the EMHRN through forging links with the social actors of the region. The Network's message must be made more audible by putting a focus on communication with the public opinions of the region.

Ladies and gentlemen, I will keep many prized souvenirs: the struggles that we waged together, our debates and discussions in the course of myriad seminars that often had to be held in Europe due to the difficulty if not impossibility of organizing them in the countries of the South. I will remember the sometimes improbable, oftentimes warm and intense meetings with men and women of all ages who were fighting to defend freedom and human rights in the Arab world. There were meetings in Damascus, Jerusalem, Gaza, Amman, Cairo, Beirut or Rabat, until I could return to the country where I was born and raised and where I was welcomed on arrival by people I will never forget, including old friends and comrades who had put their mark on my life and from whom I had learned so much.

People such as Souhayr, Driss, Moataz, Khadija, Amina, Alya, Khemmais, Ayachi, Michel, as well as many others who have been at my side in the last thirty years in the struggles in the field of immigration, such as Mohiedine and Tarek, to name but a few. I was overjoyed on that day as I could feel how proud my children, my wife and other members of my family were. The struggle for human rights, both demanding and noble, fully deserves the effort. It is what gave me the strength to venture into the Constituent Assembly election in Tunisia. Thank you again for having given me the opportunity to carry out those struggles with you and farewell”.

All the participants paid tribute to Kamel Jendoubi with moved applause and a long standing ovation.

ASSESSING THE PAST

In a session chaired by EMHRN vice-President Lone Lindholt, the 2009-2011 activity report was presented by EMHRN Executive Director Marc Schade-Poulsen, followed by the presentation of the financial report by EMHRN Treasurer Moataz El Fegiery. At the end of the session, the reports were submitted to the GA for formal approval.

As the floor opened for debate, plenary discussions between the participants were held on the Network's activities in the last three years, and more generally in the past 15 years, aiming at helping the EMHRN learning from its experiences.

In general, the outgoing Executive Committee and the Secretariat were warmly commended for the reports that were presented. In addition the following issues were raised:

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AS A PRIORITY

While the Activity report recalled that strengthening the members' capacity to promote human rights in the field of Human Rights Education (HRE) was one of the priorities in the previous 2008-2010 work programme adopted at the 8th General Assembly in Barcelona, GA participants regretted that only little mention to HRE had been made in the report. The Secretariat explained that this was partly due to the fact that a financial contract had not been received as expected and money had had to be saved on this area, but also mainly to the fact that the issue of HRE was lacking a clear definition on how to be effectively dealt with at the EuroMed level, and on how to bring added-value in this area. In the past three years, discussions were held on this by the Executive Committee and it was decided to take the promotion of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education as a starting point. HRE was thus included in the new three-year work programme as part of the EMHRN capacity building activities.

THE NEED FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The EMHRN members felt that communication had been one of the Network's weaknesses in the past few years. On the one side, concrete examples of positive achievements in terms of communication were shared by some participants: it was the case among other of the effective circulation of the Lebanese Justice report that led to the drafting of the terms of reference of an EU project on judicial reform being directly inspired from the report; or the example of the Freedom of Association Working group that issued reports in every country of the region in order to raise awareness of the local media. Advocacy work in Brussels was also mentioned as a good example of good results in the field of communication. On the other side however, issues regarding insufficient external communication were raised by some participants. The case of a report on Justice in Tunisia did not reach all the relevant stakeholders in the country was mentioned. It showed the importance of circulating the reports among as many relevant actors as possible in order for the EMHRN's work to be fully used as tools for promoting human rights. As far as internal communication is concerned, the lack of visibility of the working groups' activities was pointed out by some members who deplored that they neither had systematically heard about them nor read about them in the activity report. Working groups are seen as small laboratories from which great ideas arise, hence the need for always reporting back to all the members.

It was replied that the EMHRN had always tried to get through to the members and to circulate the reports among them. The EMHRN would most likely never be a “breaking news” organisation, but the Network had become an important resource for the politicians and the media in the EuroMed region.

Nevertheless, the EMHRN’s internal and external communication has been a topic for discussion among the Executive Committee for some time, and note was taken of the comments expressed by the audience. The issue will be tackled and further developed by the new Executive Committee that will define a new communication strategy.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES ON THE NETWORK AND ITS MEMBERS

Members of the Executive Committee recalled that when the EMHRN was created 15 years ago, the idea was to accompany the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership by gathering civil society human rights organisations from the EU and the South and East Mediterranean that would work together around two axes: a thematic approach, based on the priorities shared by both the North and the South and proposed by the EMHRN members; and an ad hoc country approach defined according to the priorities arising from some countries at specific moments. Based on this, the Network has always tried to define what added-value it could bring: when issues were already being dealt with by other actors, the EMHRN would work through partnerships to seek complementarity.

Throughout the years, the EMHRN grew bigger in terms of influence and of number of members, and managed to impose itself more and more as an important actor in the region. In the meantime, as the Network always aimed at sticking to its mandate centred on its members, limits were set to a maximum of four member organisations by country, including one women’s rights organisation. It is now up to the General Assembly and the future new Executive Committee to decide on what kind of Network they want and whether the number of members by country should be extended in order to allow some good organisations to access the EMHRN, while still considering the financial consequences of such an extension.

On a more general note, the participants stressed that the EMHRN should try to always to learn from its past experiences, may they be positive or negative, and make a regular exercise of “learning lessons”, in order to keep on growing as a key actor in the EuroMed region.

And the end of the first day of the GA, and following the discussions, the 2009-2011 activity report and the financial report were unanimously approved by the General Assembly.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

On the second day of the General Assembly, Saturday 2 June, the participants were called upon discussing and reflecting on the planning documents for the next years, voting on the accession of new members to the Network, and electing a new EMHRN Executive Committee.

ADOPTION OF A NEW STRATEGY, WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET



The 2012-2018 Strategy, which was presented to the General Assembly for discussion and adoption, was the result of a large consultation within the Network. In a first phase, a questionnaire was sent out to all the members in 2010 to help identifying the latter's needs and expectations from the EMHRN in the next six years. The members showed great involvement in the process as around 60 percent replied to the consultation. In a second phase, the results were compiled and a proposal for a new Strategy was drafted. This draft 2012-2018 Strategy was submitted for comments to all the members in a third phase in early 2012. In

parallel, a work programme was drafted according to the draft Strategy. The General Assembly was then the last phase of the participative process as the members had the opportunity to make the last additional adjustments and express concrete recommendations to finalise the new Strategy and the work programme.

The objective of the discussions was to ensure that there was overall consensus among the members on the EMHRN's future work. The objective was also to enrich the documents through the debates.

The main ideas and proposals of the documents were introduced in a plenary session followed by detailed discussions in three workshops on the main parts of the Strategy: thematic approach; country approach; and working methods.

Lively debates were held in the workshops and led to the following comments and recommendations on the new Strategy and work programme:

◆ THEMATIC APPROACH OF THE EMHRN

Democratic transition, legislative and judicial reform

The EMHRN's work on **transitional justice** should be explicitly mentioned in the part of the Strategy on democratic transition, legislative and judicial reform and should be a made priority in the work programme. The need for the Network to support the transitional justice processes was strongly emphasised and it was recommended to provide with **training** on the matter for judges, lawyers and civil society, identified as the main actors of transitional justice.

Gender equality and women's rights

Some specific areas in terms of gender equality were reported back from the recent Gender Working group meeting and suggested as **priorities** for the work on Gender: the constitutionalisation of women's rights, fighting violence against women and the feminisation of poverty.

Furthermore, the need to stress the **gender perspective** in all the EMHRN working groups was highlighted and it was recommended that gender mainstreaming be dealt with as a transversal theme.

The fight against discrimination

It was recommended that discrimination include **islamophobia** and also be linked to the rights of **minorities**.

Migrants', asylum seekers' and refugees' rights

It was recommended to include the **stateless** in the part of the Strategy on migrants', asylum seekers' and refugees' rights and to develop solid expertise on this matter within the working group on migration.

It was also suggested that the EMHRN focus on the migrants' detention conditions and expulsion trials.

Furthermore, the issue of the lack of protection regimes in the South should be tackled together with the issue of the **deterioration of protection regimes in the North**. Hence, part 3.2.5 paragraph 6 of the new Strategy should be rephrased accordingly.

Economic and social rights

Doubts were expressed on whether economic and social rights would work out as a thematic approach since they cut across all the other themes. It was thus recommended to take the **relations between the North and the South** as a starting point for dealing with economic and social rights and to look into how the EMHRN can bring added value through its work.

Besides, it was strongly recommended to integrate the promotion and protection of **cultural rights** into the EMHRN's work on economic and social rights.

In complement to the discussions on the existing themes presented in the new Strategy, other themes were suggested and more general comments on the thematic approach were raised by the participants.

The importance of **human rights education** was strongly emphasised in the discussions, as it was described as a very useful tool to fight against extremism and to deeply root the human rights values into people, especially in the current context where the governments are trying to impose a regressing

vision of human rights. While concerns were raised about the absence of human rights education in the thematic approach of the Strategy, questions were raised on whether it would not be more appropriate to approach HRE as a working method than as a theme, considering the fact that HRE should be transversal and dealt with in all the working groups.

Attention was also drawn to the absence of a **youth perspective** in the Network's future work. It was recommended that this be mainstreamed in the new Strategy in order to actively involve more young people in the Network.

Furthermore, the importance of ensuring **synergies between thematic and country work** was stressed since regional and national work are intrinsically linked to each other. It was thus recommended that thematic issues always be included in the country approach.

Finally, considering the difficulties of adding numerous new themes to the Strategy and setting up additional working groups, it was suggested alternatively to state in the document that the EMHRN **encourages its members** to work on other themes such as cultural rights or human rights education.

◆ COUNTRY APPROACH OF THE EMHRN

A vertical approach from ground up

The vertical approach, used by some participants to describe working directly in a country, has to be from the bottom up and not from top down. It is important that the EMHRN plays a complementary role in the countries by cooperating and not competing with the local organisations. The latter should assess the needs in the country and shape the priorities.

Effective emergency response mechanisms

Country specific issues that arise are often urgent and require emergency response mechanisms. The EMHRN should therefore consider developing an effective framework or model for rapid response to urgent country specific situations.

Country selection

Observations were made on how the Network should select the countries and the possible impact of its choices should be taken into account as, for example, the selection of one country for its wretched human rights situation might send the message that the human rights violations in other countries are less serious. In that sense, it is very important to implement the country work in a way that does not contribute to undermining the other countries' ability to raise funds by shifting focus from them.

The EMHRN's added value

The Network can play a strong role in building capacity in the countries as its country approach can be an asset to activate civil society organisations, motivate them towards membership and be a platform for advocacy at EU level.

To address the issue of limited resources, the EMHRN should initially target the countries where the vertical approach would have a benefit on the ground and where the Network's involvement can really add value.

◆ EMHRN WORKING METHODS

Working groups

The communication within the working groups should be strengthened and the WG members should exchange their newsletters and other documents and reports that might be relevant for their group.

It was also suggested that the EMHRN provides training on social media and new forms of communication for the working groups.

EMHRN capacity building activities

It was noted that there is a tendency for international actors to employ only international staff to intervene in humanitarian crises at national/local level instead of developing the capacities of the local actors for handling the situation and managing the response programs. In this context, the EMHRN was called upon intensifying its lobby towards the European Union and other international actors to raise awareness on the importance of running capacity building activities instead of imposing their own organisations on local groups.

Furthermore, it is important that the Network develops tools to not only to deconstruct the old regimes but also help building new systems based on human rights.

Advocacy

In terms of advocacy, the mandate of the member organisations working on the ground comes from the victims themselves and the voices of the victims should therefore be heard as clearly as possible at international and EU levels. In order to strengthen the impact of advocacy, it was suggested developing an advocacy method based on victims' direct testimonies

Besides, more focus should be put on identifying the targets and goals for advocacy and on tailoring the Network's responses to them.

It was also suggested dealing with the issue of the changing relations between the EU and the South through advocacy activities.

Finally, it was recommended to use the outcome of each theme of the working groups for advocacy purpose dealt with by the EMHRN (through evaluations that could be conducted by the working groups for example).

Communication

While the EMHRN already cooperates with international observatories and issues press releases in defence of individuals who are at risk, there is still a need for more direct and immediate action to be taken on this matter. This should be tackled within the framework of the communication strategy, namely through larger dissemination of news (the need for developing effective emergency

mechanisms to respond to urgent situations was also stressed in the discussions on the country approach).

Besides, campaigning should be used as a communication method by using the numerous and rich resources and materials from the Network's members.

Furthermore, the need to make the Network's and members' reports more visible was raised.

Finally, the interactions between the members and the EMHRN Secretariat should be enhanced, for example through the creation of a chat-room or e-platform for the members to contact the Secretariat.

Optimising the existing resources

In addition to the comments made on the working methods presented in the new Strategy, attention was drawn by some participants to the need to reflect on the optimisation of the Network's existing and available resources. The Secretariat should collect and assess the successful experiences from working groups and member organisations and share them within the Network. A guide on practices to promote a human rights culture for example could be a concrete result of fruitful experience sharing among the members.

The discussions, comments and recommendations expressed in the three workshops were reported back in a plenary session on Sunday 3 June at the end of which both the 2012-2018 Strategy and the work programme -subject to changes according to the recommendations- were unanimously adopted. Furthermore, a budget for 2012-2014 was presented and formally approved by the General Assembly.

The 2012-2018 Strategy, the work programme and the 2012-2014 budget are available on www.euromedrights.net

ADOPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

On Saturday 2 June in the morning, representatives of the 14 organisations that had applied for EMHRN membership and that had been approved by the Executive Committee between 2009 and 2012, introduced themselves to the General Assembly. All the candidates, composed by 11 regular national organisations, 2 regular regional organisations and 1 international organisation, were formally adopted as new members by the General Assembly and warmly welcomed by the audience.

REGULAR NATIONAL MEMBERS

Andalus Institute For Tolerance And Anti-Violence Studies
ARCI - Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana
Greek Council For Refugees
Human Rights Institute of Catalonia (IDHC)
KISA - Action For Equality, Support, Antiracism
KVINFO
Mizan Law Group For Human Rights
National Federation Solidarity with Women (FNSF)
SODEPAU (Solidarity For Development and Peace)
Solicitors' International Human Rights Group (SIHRG)
Women's Centre For Legal Aid And Counselling (WCLAC)

REGULAR REGIONAL MEMBERS

Arabic Network For Human Rights Information (ANHRI)
European Association For Human Rights (AEDH)

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Association for the Prevention of Torture

Besides, the General Assembly took note that two regular members left the EMHRN: **Aim for Human Rights**, that had ceased to exist; and **INTERCENTER**, that stopped being actively involved in the Network's activities.

Furthermore, the EMHRN nominated new honorary members to pay tribute to their work on the Network's side in the past years: **Bahey El-Din Hassan**, **Driss el Yazami**, **Theocharis Papamargaris**, **Iain Byrne**, **Eva Nordström**, **Lone Lindholt**, **Maysa Zorob**, **Emrah Seyhanlioglu**, **Marie Lavrentiadou**, **Wadih Al-Asmar**.

Finally, **Kamel Jendoubi** was designated as EMHRN honorary President.

A full list of EMHRN members is available on www.euromedrights.net

ELECTION OF A NEW EMHRN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PRESIDENT



The EMHRN elections were held on Saturday 2 June in the afternoon. The 55 regular members (out of 65) that were present voted at the GA Secretariat to elect their new President and Executive Committee. According to the EMHRN Statutes, the EC is made up of 12 members, half of which is representatives of member organisations from the European Union, and the other half from Mediterranean partner countries of the EU. Furthermore, the EC must strive to include an equal number of men and women.

The results of the elections were announced at the opening of the first session on Sunday 3 June. The following members were elected:

Candidate	Organisation	Country
Mediterranean partner countries of the EU		
Alya Chamhari	Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalité	Regional *
Ayachi Hammami	Tunisian League for the Defence of Human Rights	Tunisia
Mahmoud M. AbuRahma	Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights	Palestine
Moataz El Fegeiry	Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Non-Violence Studies	Egypt
Nassera Dutour	Collective of the Families of the Disappeared in Algeria	Algeria
Osman Isci	Human Rights Association (IHD)	Turkey
EU member countries		
Anitta Kynsilehto	TAPRI - Mediterranean Studies Project, Tampere Peace Research Institute, University of Tampere	Finland
Eugenia Papamakariou	Greek Committee for International Democratic Solidarity (EEDDA)	Greece
Isaias Barrenaias	ACSUR	Spain
Raffaella Bolini	Arci – Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana	Italy
Søs Nissen	Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims (RCT)	Denmark
EMHRN President		
Michel Tubiana	Human Rights League (LDH)	France

* Headquarters in Tunisia

As newly elected EMHRN President, Michel Tubiana addressed the General Assembly to warmly thank them for their trust. He also called for the renewal of the generation that fought for the promotion and protection of human rights and stressed the need for passing on the torch to the youth. Finally, he called on all the members to keep on **working together highlighting their shared ideals**.

TAKING A STAND

The Final Declaration Committee convened on Saturday 2 June in the evening to discuss on the amendments to the draft **GA final declaration** as well as on the proposals for additional **press statements** previously submitted by the participants.

On Sunday 3 June in the morning, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the following final resolution:



GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINAL RESOLUTION

“The 9th General Assembly of the EMHRN, meeting on 1-3 June in Copenhagen, hails the winds of change that have been blowing south of the Mediterranean. The people of the region have been demonstrating their longing for dignity, democracy and freedom without occupation. First, the Network wishes to pay its respect to those who succumbed to the blows of the oppressors, many of whom had already experienced imprisonment, torture and exile. These militants – men, women and even children – were expressing their aspirations for a better life and a fairer society, and those responsible of their deaths must not remain unpunished.

The future of the region still hangs in the balance: it remains to be seen if it will be marked by further democratization and recognition of human rights, the status quo, regression, obscurantism or new forms of oppression.

More than ever, we must ensure that commitment to human rights, civil and political liberties, freedom of conscience, and economic, social and cultural rights takes root in each of the countries of the region. By the same token, gender equality must be entrenched in order to break the shackles of a destructive patriarchy that does not only hurt women but also the whole of society. It is, together with the respect of the rule of law and democratic institutions, a condition for sustainable development. To this end, the constitutions in the process of being drawn up must include provisions guaranteeing respect for the fundamental principles of human rights, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience as well as gender equality.

However, all this will depend on the capacity of the political forces and civil societies to spearhead a genuine democratic and inclusive dialogue to carry out initiatives that open new horizons to the populations, and to actively involve youth and women in the process as the vehicles of change that they are. In order not to disappoint these hopes, it is essential to fight against social and economic disparities as well as corruption, and to fight for the establishment of an independent justice system as well as for minority rights that are increasingly at stake.

More than ever, this region of the world needs the support of all international actors. First of all, the European Union must take stock of the last twenty years in which it backed dictatorial regimes. Such an attitude revealed a profoundly unequal relationship that goes beyond a resolve to shield Europe from migrants and terrorism. The EU must readjust its actions towards more support for the popular demands for democracy.

To that must be added the institutional disorder and defective democratic structures that characterise the European Union, resulting in increased power for the states and a preference for bilateral relations to the detriment of a common approach.

The EMHRN calls upon the European Union to drastically change its vision regarding its relationship with the countries south of the Mediterranean. This relationship should be based on equality between partners who share common human rights values while refraining from imposing solutions, particularly on issues regarding immigration or economic agreements that would solely reflect European interests.

The fate of refugees must solely depend on the implementation of the protective provisions of the 1951 Convention on refugees and not on migration policies. The European Union, the Arab League as well as all the countries of the region must meet the obligations set out in that instrument, in particular by ratifying it in the case of countries that have not yet done so.

It calls upon the European Union to provide with the economic cooperation and assistance that these countries need in a way that the on-going process of change does not derail because of social and economic crises.

The EMHRN expresses its growing concern regarding the occupation of the Palestinian territories where on-going discriminatory practices reflect a determination to colonize those territories. There will be no lasting peace as long as the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people as well as their right to return is not guaranteed and as long as a viable Palestinian state with adequate resources is not recognized. In accordance with international law, the EMHRN calls upon the international community to, as of now, protect the Palestinian people from physical violence, the violation of human life as well as arbitrary measures of all types that are inflicted upon them by the Israeli authorities, and urges the European Union to stand firmly behind the Palestinian people. Furthermore, it calls upon the European Union and all the countries of the region and beyond to endeavour to make that part of the world a nuclear-free zone.

Today, thanks to the links they have established between themselves, the civil societies are outlining what could be the Euro-Mediterranean region of the future, one that shows pride of its diversity, common values and solidarities. Leaning on their collective struggles, their shared experience and their independence, they are the ones who can and must persuade the various governments to adopt their vision, which is the vision upon which the EMHRN was created. “



In the margin of the GA

A EMHRN delegation composed of Anita Kynsilehto, Maria de Donato, Barbara Harell-Bond, Muhanad Al Hasani, Serge Kollwelter, Ali Diwan and Wadih al-Asmar was sent on 1 June in the evening to talk to Syrian asylum seekers on hunger strike in Denmark. The visit took place in an open refugee camp located 40 km from Copenhagen. The delegation reported that the hunger strike had ended. They explained that while the several hundreds of refugees had been there for about two months and could not go back to Syria, they were not allowed to work either and had no opportunity to integrate the society – they only had the right to wait.

The delegation could enter the centre without any formality, as it was an open centre where asylum seekers could come and go as they pleased. But the centre is located 20 km from the closest city and there is no means of transportation, which leads to isolation.

The delegation called the EMNRH upon taking a stand on this issue. A press statement was adopted by the GA

*Read the press release “**No deportation in Syria: the rights of Syrian asylum-seekers need to be protected**” in the Annex on p. 20.*

Other press statements on **Libyan Prime Minister Baghdadi**, the situation in **Syria**, and on **Algeria** were submitted for discussion and adopted by the General Assembly (*read the full texts in the annexes of the report*).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network thanks **DANIDA** and **SIDA** for their generous financial support.

We would also like to thank the **Executive Committee and the EMHRN staff** for making this 9th General Assembly possible and for making it a great success.

Finally, a warm thank you to **all the participants** of the General Assembly for their lively debates, fruitful comments and active involvement that will help shaping and strengthening the EMHRN's future work.

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NO DEPORTATION TO SYRIA:

THE RIGHTS OF SYRIAN ASYLUM-SEEKERS NEED TO BE PROTECTED

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN), a regional network of civil society organizations engaged in human rights work, convened for its general assembly in Copenhagen 1-3 June 2012. We are deeply concerned for the news concerning asylum-seekers of different nationalities who have been staging hunger-strikes for several weeks across Denmark.

We confirmed media information by visiting one location where refugees live and met with persons of all ages who had stayed in Denmark for varying periods of time ranging from a few months up to ten years. Specifically to the Syrians, we met with persons who are waiting for a decision concerning their claim for asylum as well as persons who have already been issued with a deportation order. Given the aggravating conflict and the human rights situation in the country, we recall that full protection of their rights need to be ensured, including access to work, education, training and accommodation.

We consider the issue of Syrian refugees as an extremely urgent issue where not only the neighbouring countries but the European Union member states need to engage responsibly. The Network calls for all the EU member states to respect their obligations under the international humanitarian law and the international refugee law.

Concerned for the worsening conflict in Syria, the organizations believe that following the principle of *non-refoulement*, first of all, no person should be deported to Syria. The asylum claims of the persons who have recently arrived to European Union member states should be processed rapidly and full protection of their rights needs to be ensured. The cases of those who have already received a deportation order should be reopened on the basis of the current situation and serious human rights violations in Syria.

As for the context we are presently convening, we call the Danish government to guarantee the full respect of refugees' rights, including the right to education, right to health care and right to work.





EMERGENCY RESOLUTION (ALGERIA)

The EMHRN General Assembly strongly condemns the violations of labour rights and human rights in Algeria. Its members express their solidarity with the nine Union leaders of the National Federation of Justice Employees, affiliated to SNAPAP (National Independent Union of Public Administration Personnel), who have been leading a hunger strike for 28 days as a result of the refusal to recognise their trade union and urge the Algerian authorities to act with urgency.





SYRIA: FROM RESIGNATION TO HORROR

The 9th General Assembly of the EMHRN hereby expresses its full and absolute condemnation for the acts of the Syrian regime. For decades this regime has subjected its population to a brutal dictatorship. In the face of a revolution for dignity and freedom, Bashar Al Assad has resorted with total impunity to a brutal murderous policy against the Syrian people.

The international community continues to fail in fulfilling its responsibility to protect the Syrian population, while Russia and China obstinately continue to protect Bashar El Assad's regime. This constitutes an act of complicity with the Syrian regime's policy.

The recent increase in massacres, as evidenced by the tragic events of Al Houla, is a clear illustration of the insane and destructive approach of Bashar Al Assad against the population. This is being done with the sole aim of maintaining power despite the Syrian people's rejection of his rule. Al Assad's obstinacy is leading the country and the region as a whole into a spiral of violence.

The Syrian people are resorting to their fundamental right to rebellion, as recognized by international instruments, and it is the duty of every individual to support them.

The responsibility of the UN Security Council is to refer to the International Criminal Court those responsible of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Syria.

All measures should be taken to assist the victims. These include: persons who have been displaced by the Syrian army, refugees who have fled to bordering countries and who are not being taken care of adequately, as well as refugees who have fled to countries in Europe and who are entitled to receive all necessary assistance to allow them to lead a decent life.

We urge the international community to end its policy of ambiguity, to put an end to the bloodshed, to bring those responsible to justice, and to offer protection and asylum to those who have been forced to leave their country.





EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

MR. PRESIDENT

**WE CALL ON YOU NOT TO EXTRADITE FORMER LIBYAN PRIME MINISTER
BAGHDADI MAHMOUDI**

The participants to the 9th General Assembly of the EMHRN that was held in Copenhagen on 1-2 June 2012 call on His Excellency President Moncef Marzouki of Tunisia not to extradite Baghdadi Mahmoudi, former head of the Libyan government, to Libya.

Like the majority of human rights organizations and associations, we believe that the life of Mr. Mahmoudi would be in danger if he were to be extradited to Libya. He would be at serious risk of torture and ill-treatment since conditions for a fair trial are not met. Furthermore, he would be liable to the death penalty.

The participants to the 9th General Assembly of the EMHRN believe that the most appropriate solution would be to hand over Mr. Mahmoudi to the International Criminal Court, which has the capability to prosecute him according to the law with regard to the large number of crimes and serious human rights violations committed by him and his government, such as killings, torture, ill-treatments, arbitrary imprisonments, etc. Indeed, the intensity and gravity of the crimes of which Mr. Mahmoudi is accused make it imperative that his trial be conducted in an exemplary fashion, which would be the case if it were to take place before the International Criminal Court.

Mr. President, you have the power to ensure that human rights are respected in this case; do not extradite Mr. Baghdadi Mahmoudi.





**9th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network**

Copenhagen, 31 May - 3 June 2012

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Wednesday 30 May

Evening People arriving
Informal dinner (buffet) at Tivoli Hotel

Thursday 31 May

09.00-17.00 EuroMed Seminar

19.00 Welcome dinner in Tivoli with speeches

09.00-12.45 End of EuroMed Seminar

12.45-14.30 *Lunch*

14.30-15.00 **Opening of the General Assembly**

- Adoption of the meeting Agenda
- Adoption of Assembly Bureau and Declaration Committee, and election of Vote counters

Chair: Kamel Jendoubi, CRLDHT, EMHRN President *

15.00-15.15 **Address to the assembly by Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Villy Søvndal**

15.15-16.00 **Presentation of reports**

- Political Report: Kamel Jendoubi
- Activity Report: Marc Schade-Poulsen, Executive Director EMHRN
- Financial Reports: Moataz El Fegiery, CIHRS, Treasurer EMHRN

Chair: Lone Lindholt, DIHR, EMHRN Vice President*

16.00-16.30 *Coffee break*

16.30-18.30 **Discussion of reports**

Chair: Lone Lindholt*

18.30-18.45 **Vote on the reports**

09.00-9.30 Presentation of the new EMHRN members and vote

Chair: Kamel Jendoubi*

9.30-11.00 Presentation and initial discussion of EMHRN Strategy, including Work program and budget

Chair: Wadih Al Asmar (Solida, and member of the EMHRN EC) and Anna Bozzo (honorary member)*

Presentation: Marc Schade-Poulsen

11.00-11.15 *Coffee break*

11.15-13.15 3 Workshops on Strategy

- **Thematic work**

Chair: Ishai Menuchin (PCATI)*

Presentation: Magali Till (Acsur, member of the EMHRN EC)

- **Country Work**

Chair: Søs Nissen (RCT)*

Presentation: Moataz El Fegiery (CIHRS, member of the EMHRN EC)

- **Working Methods**

Chair: Wadih Al Asmar (ADFM)*

Presentation: Mayza Zorob (Al Haq, member of the EMHRN EC)

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 18.30)

Chair: Souheyr Belhassen (FIDH) and Gerald Staberock (OMCT)*

15.00-15.30 *Coffee break*

15.30- 19.00 Meeting of the representative Council of the Foundation

19.00 Meeting of the Declaration Committee

Sunday 3 June

9.00-9.15 Election results

Chair: Kamel Jendoubi*

9.15-10.00 Reports from workshops and election results

Chair: Serge Kollwelter (AEDH)*

10.00-10.15 Votes on Strategy, Work program and budget & appointment of an auditor

Chair: Serge Kollwelter (AEDH)*

10.15-10.45 *Coffee break*

10.45-12.30 Adoption of General Assembly Declaration

Chair: Lubna Dawany (Mizan Law Group)*

Presentation : Michel Tubiana (LDH, member of the EMHRN EC)

12.30-13.00 Closing of the General Assembly by new President of the EMHRN

13.00-14.00 *Lunch*

14.00 Meeting of the new Executive Committee



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

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