

2024 EUROPEAN ELECTIONS MANIFESTO FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Democracy and the rule of law are under threat in Europe. A growing number of governments are attempting to undermine Europe's democratic foundations by **compromising checks and balances, silencing the media, assaulting civil society, and restricting fundamental human rights and freedoms.** These actions **contradict the core principles that European States have committed to respecting,** both at the national and international levels, by signing on to international treaties and conventions, including the European Union's Treaties and the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

The European Union (EU) is a community of values based on respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights. Its core foundations are pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice and solidarity. In the face of growing threats to these principles and the universality of human rights, **EU institutions and Member States must respect and defend these values** and hold those who violate them, including economic actors, accountable.

The EU has an essential role to play in promoting a world order firmly rooted in respect for human rights for all. This is particularly true now at a time when severe crises are unfolding on Europe's borders. These crises require the EU and its Member States to commit to promoting respect for human rights and accountability for their violations on a global scale.

In the run-up to the 2024 European elections, we – civil society organisations working on human rights across Europe – call on all candidates, as well as the Commission and European Parliament that will be elected to make human rights a key objective, and commit to upholding and promoting the following 10 human rights priorities:

1. DEFEND DEMOCRATIC STANDARDS AND THE RULE OF LAW

This can be done by:

- Effectively addressing backsliding in EU Member States;
- Ensuring that those responsible for violations are held accountable, by using all available instruments, including those linking rule of law violations to public finances;
- Imposing political and financial sanctions on Member States who do not respect the rule of law;
- Further strengthening the institutional, legal and policy frameworks enabling the EU to respond firmly, effectively and timely to such breaches;

- Ensuring that any laws, policies and measures adopted in response to an emergency situation are necessary and proportionate, and take into account the need to respect human rights.

2. PROTECT AND EMPOWER CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS, AS WELL AS ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

This can be done by:

- Fostering a safe and enabling environment for civil society to act as a necessary watchdog in a democratic society;
- Fighting restrictions to civic space, including those affecting the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly;
- Promoting civil dialogue as a way to facilitate public participation in decision-making and shape the political agenda to achieve positive social outcomes and increase transparency;
- Ensuring civil society's access to adequate funding;
- Adopting a framework to protect civil society organisations, as well as environmental and human rights defenders from threats and attacks, including smear campaigns and harmful narratives.

3. PROMOTE EQUALITY AND COMBAT DISCRIMINATION

This can be done by:

- Promoting laws and policies that foster equality and anti-discrimination on all grounds, including sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, social status, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Ensuring that everyone has full and equal access to all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, in law and in practice;
- Taking into account the specific vulnerabilities and needs that characterise certain individuals and groups in society to ensure effective equality;
- Addressing bias-motivated discrimination and violence, including hate speech and hate crime;
- Developing narratives that contribute to deconstructing harmful stereotypes and fighting stigma against certain individuals or groups.

4. FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

This can be done by:

- Ensuring equal access for all to economic and social rights, including employment, health, housing, education, goods and services;

- Improving the conditions and prospects for the socially disadvantaged and allowing all people to have access to equal opportunities and resources by strengthening social protection and welfare;
- Strengthening the social dimension of economic and financial policies, as well as governance at both the EU and Member State levels;
- Adopting and implementing measures to mitigate the economic and social costs of emergency situations (e.g. COVID-19, energy crisis).

5. PROTECT AND PROMOTE WOMEN’S RIGHTS

This can be done by:

- Guaranteeing that women's rights are respected in law and in practice;
- Ensuring that women and girls have access to human rights, including sexual and reproductive health, without discrimination;
- Fighting domestic and gender-based violence;
- Countering gender backlash and Countering retrogressive laws, policies and measures that restrict or undermine women’s rights;
- Opposing gender backlash and anti-gender narratives that promote traditional societal and family roles to perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes.

6. SAFEGUARD THE LIVES, RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF MIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

This can be done by:

- Recognising that human mobility is a global phenomenon that shapes our world and helps build prosperous societies;
- Ensuring that the lives, rights and dignity of people on the move are respected and protected, in accordance with European and international human rights and refugee laws;
- Ensuring that the lives and rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are at the heart of the EU and its Member States’ migration policies and take priority over security and border control;
- Guaranteeing access to international protection for asylum-seekers, regardless of their origin; ;
- Providing access to safe and legal channels for entry into Europe;
- Refraining from criminalising migrants and those providing assistance to them;
- Sharing responsibility for refugees, in accordance with the solidarity principle that underlies EU cooperation;
- Ceasing to outsource responsibility for migration management to non-EU countries with poor human rights records, repealing existing cooperation agreements on migration and refraining from entering new ones.

7. ENSURE THAT ECONOMIC ACTORS RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

This can be done by:

- Strengthening national, regional and international legal frameworks to prevent and address human rights violations and environmental impacts linked to corporate activities;
- Enacting and implementing mandatory due diligence to foster sustainability and responsible corporate behaviour throughout the value chains, both within Europe and abroad;
- Making human rights and the environment central to business decisions and corporate governance.

8. RECOGNISE THE UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO A CLEAN, HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT AND ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

This can be done by:

- Recognising that the climate crisis has devastating impacts on human rights, including the right to life, self-determination, development, and economic and social rights (e.g. right to food, health, housing, water and sanitation);
- Supporting initiatives at the national, regional and international levels aimed at recognising the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right;
- Developing new standards and mechanisms to address the consequences of the climate crisis on the environment and human rights, including the rights of future generations.

9. PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL CRIMES AND SERIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

This can be done by:

- Supporting initiatives aimed at strengthening the legal framework at the national, regional and international levels;
- Holding perpetrators accountable by strengthening the mechanisms to combat impunity for international crimes and serious human rights violations committed within and outside Europe, and also that victims and their families have access to an effective remedy and reparations;
- Guaranteeing that victims' rights are respected and protected and that victims play a central role in proceedings that concern them.

10. ENSURE THAT DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ARE CENTRAL TO THE EU'S FOREIGN POLICY

This can be done by:

- Ensuring that the human rights obligations of the EU and its Member States are consistently and coherently implemented in the EU's foreign policy;
- Mobilising to strengthen and advance human rights and democracy on a global scale, as set out in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy;
- Making human rights concerns central to the EU and Member States' diplomatic relations with non-EU countries;
- Using all diplomatic tools to make financial support and development, trade and military cooperation conditional on respect for human rights;
- Ensuring coherence between what is required from EU and non-EU countries, including candidate countries, in terms of democratic standards and human rights;
- Avoiding double standards which undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the EU, both inside and outside the EU

fidh

Uniting those fighting for a fair and just world

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) unites nearly 200 national civil society organisations spanning over 115 countries, all dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights. Together, we protect human rights defenders and victims of grave violations, empowering them to take decisive action. We document international crimes, denounce violations, hold perpetrators to account, and advocate for civil, political, economic, social, environmental and cultural rights with key decision-makers, businesses and the public.

Founded in 1922, FIDH is the first network to uphold and promote the universality of human rights. We remain a steadfast advocate for human rights on the global stage, embodying the principles of justice, accountability and the inherent dignity of all individuals.

FIDH counts 30 member organisations in Europe.

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