

**PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND NORTH AFRICA SITUATION
AND THE EU'S RESPONSE**

Brussels, 24 March 2011. The Human Rights & Democracy Network (HRDN), comprising over 40 European civil society organisations and networks, has monitored popular demand for greater freedom and political change in North Africa and the Middle East. This trend arose in Tunisia just two months ago and has spread around the region. Young people and women have found their political voice and have begun to drive national change, demanding justice and accountability.

Co-ordinating Members

- Amnesty International
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide
- International Rehabilitation Council for Torture victims

Full Members

- Association européenne des Droits de l'Homme
- Association for the Prevention of Torture
- CBM
- Club of Madrid
- Conference of European Churches
- Coalition for the International Criminal Court
- DEMAS
- Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
- European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
- FIACAT
- Front Line Defenders
- Human Rights Watch
- Human Rights Without Frontiers
- International Centre for Transitional Justice
- International Dalit Solidarity Network
- International Federation for Human Rights
- International Harm Reduction Association
- International Lesbian and Gay Association - Europe
- International Partnership for Human Rights
- International Rescue Committee Belgium
- Justitia & Pax Netherlands
- La Strada International
- Light for the World
- Minority Rights Group International
- Open Society Institute-Brussels
- Partners for Democratic Change International
- Peace Brigade International
- Penal Reform International
- PLAN International
- Protection International
- Quaker Council for European Affairs
- Reporters sans frontières
- Save the Children
- Search for Common Ground
- Terre des Hommes International Federation
- World Coalition against the Death Penalty
- World Organisation Against Torture
- World Vision

Following the 8 March Joint Communication, 11 March Extraordinary European Council and 12-13 March Gymnich, the HRDN recommends that:

- The EU learns from its past relations with repressive regimes, and publicly recognises its mistakes and responsibilities, to address its current problems of credibility with people in the Mediterranean region and beyond,
- The EU and member states recast a comprehensive policy focused on human rights and democracy. This must address economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights, as a sound basis for sustainable development,
- The European Neighbourhood Policy is revised based on the aspirations of those who have demanded freedom, independence and democracy, and focus on the need for human rights and democratic reform. Detailed benchmarks and a calendar for reforming law and practice should be agreed with all regional countries, consulting social movements. Relations with southern Mediterranean countries should be predicated on substantial progress,
- The EU recognises that each country's social and political evolution is unique, and that each country needs a tailored approach, remembering the overall regional impact,
- The EU accepts that transformation arose from civil society, and therefore supports "bottom-up" transformation. The EU must engage in real collaboration and dialogue with civil society and the main agents of change, as it evolves in the region, and not confine itself to government contacts. The EU must continue open consultations with civil society in particular on the potential creation of a Civil Society Neighbourhood Facility. HRDN recommends consultation of civil society during the process of establishing the Facility and remains open to involvement in or coordination of consultation (including gathering input from civil society partners in the Neighbourhood region).
- Since women's, youth and minority group representatives contributed greatly to recent events, the EU publicly recognises their leadership and acknowledges their indispensable role in the transition process,
- The EU provides an arena for dialogue and maintains momentum, utilising its own experiences in southern, eastern and central Europe. The EU must provide adequate support to the new leaderships and engage them in those processes,
- The EU immediately supports victim's rehabilitation, setting up effective and independent judicial systems to combat impunity and reinforcing existing systems, promoting justice and accountability. The EU should promote the ratification, accession and implementation of key international human rights treaties, including the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC),
- The EU ensures that all refugees who reach its territory in need of protection and migrants in general, fully benefit from their rights, while the EU as a whole supports southern European countries which receive greater numbers of refugees and migrants. The EU and member states must ensure that internal policies which seek cooperation from third countries of origin and transit in managing migration conform with Treaty principles,
- The policies, structures and projects of the Union for the Mediterranean are fully revised to enshrine human rights and democratisation.

The Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) is an informal grouping of NGOs operating at EU level in the broader areas of human rights, democracy and conflict prevention. Participation in the network is open to non-governmental organizations which engage at EU level in the promotion of human rights, democracy and conflict prevention in and outside the EU.