

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/DROI>
droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu

Elena Bonner
 1923-2011



On 19 June 2011, President Buzek issued a statement on the death of Elena Bonner, human rights activist in Russia and wife of the late Andrei Sakharov saying

"Today, the world lost one of the most inspiring and dedicated human rights defenders. On behalf of the European Parliament, I wish to convey my sincere condolences to the family, friends and to the members of the Moscow Helsinki Group on the death of Elena Bonner."

[Full statement](#) of President Buzek.

Hu Jia - 2008 Sakharov Prize laureate
released from detention on 26 June 2011

President Buzek issued a statement on Hu Jia's release from detention on 26 June 2011:



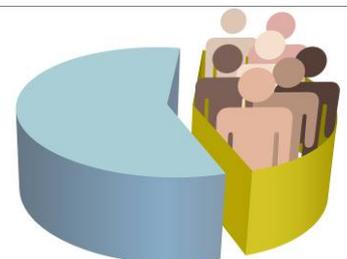
"The news of the end of the detention of Hu Jia is uplifting."

"Whilst rejoicing for Hu Jia and his family, we should not forget about the many political activists and human rights defenders who are unjustly jailed in China."

For the full statement of President Buzek click [here](#)

Minorities and unrepresented peoples
 13 April 2011

The discussion was motivated by concern at the large number of indigenous peoples, minorities and unrecognised



territories which remain inadequately represented in major international fora and which have minimal opportunities to access global bodies to defend their rights. A general overview was given by Marino Busdachin, Secretary General of UNPO, drawing attention to the scale of the problem. A



<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/DROI>
droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu

second speaker, Attiya Gamri highlighted the the case of the Iraqi Assyrians, an ancient culture facing pressure and discrimination with regard to their language, religion and education.

The EEAS set out what was being done at EU leave to deal with the issue of unrepresented peoples, mainly dialogues and measures undertaken with third countries.

Laos *13 April 2011*

In view of the general elections in Laos on 30 April, DROI held an exchange of views, jointly with the Delegation for relations with the countries of South-east Asia and ASEAN, on the human rights situation in Laos. Members heard from Vanida Thepsouvanh, President of Lao Movement for Human Rights, who said the hearing offered a glimmer of hope to Laotians. She was not optimistic that the forthcoming elections will give Laotians the right to free expression or peaceful assembly and drew attention to the many thousands of people who had disappeared/been detained for exercising their legal rights.



The EEAS representative spoke of the outcome of the last EU-Laos Working Group, an offer by the Laotian Government to organise visits for EU representatives to prisons and detention centres. The Lao authorities seemed to be making serious attempts to improve conditions of resettlement areas of the Hmong who had been expelled by the Thai authorities in 2009, and to follow up the recommendations of the UN's UPR. It was the view of the EEAS that Laos' recent trend towards opening up would continue.

De Keyser draft report on EU external policies in favour of Democratisation *14 April 2011*

Jointly with the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Development

There was considerable consensus on the direction taken in the draft report among DROI, AFET and DEVE members, and even among EEAS and Commission representatives. Véronique De Keyser, rapporteur, stressed her approach focussed on the necessity for a change in the EU's paradigm on foreign relations towards a more active application of the human rights and democracy provisions of international agreements, and a stronger control role of Parliament. Her recommendation on the need for the EU to place a greater emphasis on the political aspects of democratisation was welcomed as necessary.

Speakers from civil society added the imperative of minimum standards concerning democracy and human rights as prerequisites for further engagement with third countries.

For the timetable of the discussions and adoption of the draft report please see below (under current reports).

Press Freedom *2 May 2011*

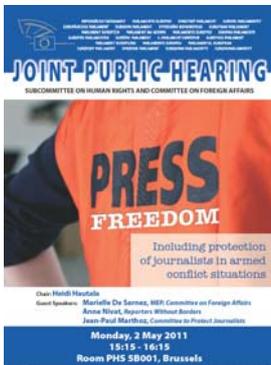
Jointly with the Committee on Foreign Affairs

The hearing focussed on freedom of the press, including the protection of journalists in armed conflict situations. The hearing also marked the World Press Freedom Day on 3 May. The first speaker, Anne Nivat, representing Reporters without Borders, gave members an insight into



<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/DROI>
droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu

journalism in war zones, stressing that journalists need help most when they return back.



The impact of new technologies was also discussed and Marietje Schaake noted that the struggle for human rights is moving online. "Bloggers are imprisoned and people are tortured for their passwords. The EU needs to become a global leader to defend and promote internet freedom, to allow free speech, press freedom and access to information".

For the press release click [here](#)

Burma 2 May 2011

In association with the Delegation for relations with the countries of South-east Asia and ASEAN



The meeting looked at developments in the light of the new political situation following the liberation of

the 1990 Sakharov winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, the elections and the inauguration of a new President.

Aung San Suu Kyi sent a video message to the members of DROI in which she reflected on the uncertainty of the current situation, and although she mentioned poverty and thousands of political prisoners, she did not adopt a hostile approach to the new established authorities.

The EEAS and the Euro-Burma office adopted a similar approach, being in mind that, for the moment, sanctions remain in place.

DROI delegation to Mexico 16-20 May 2011



The five member DROI delegation - Richard Howitt, Chair of the delegation; Heidi Hautala, Laima Liucija Andrikiienė, Maria Eleni Koppa and Marian-Jean Marinescu - to Honduras and Mexico completed its mission and in spite of the high levels of violence, and impunity, in both countries, the visit took place without any major security concerns.



<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/DROI>
droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu



The visit to **Honduras** took place at a particular delicate moment, just one week before the expected return to the country of the former President who was ousted in a coup in 2009. The delegation noted the strong commitment of the Honduran authorities to adopt various international human rights law texts and increase the effectiveness of the judicial system. The delegation also met with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (looking into the 2009 coup) chaired by a former Guatemalan Vice-President. The Commission will report in a few weeks following the return of ex-President Zelaya on 27 May 2011. A separate Truth Commission backed by NGOs is also preparing a report and members encouraged the two bodies to exchange ideas.

In Mexico a similarly high level of impunity is also a cause for profound concerns in view of the increasing power of drug and human traffickers who have a tendency to extreme violence to discourage any challenges to their power by Government, NGOs or the media. The Government's "militarisation" of the war on drugs is also proving problematic in terms of reported human rights violations.

In both countries the findings of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission have been helpful in encouraging reform and in Mexico the integration of human rights into a revised Constitution plus the

appointment of various special prosecutors were clearly positive steps.

The delegation received a warm welcome in **Oaxaca** where the Governor has initiated judicial reforms and is committed to reducing impunity. A particular attack on human rights defenders last year which led to the death of two activists, Jyri Jaakkola and Betty Cariño, was raised as it had been the subject of a DROI hearing last year.

A great deal of press interest was reflected in the meeting of the DROI delegation with the Mexican Senate and the press conference at the end of the visit.

[Press release](#) issued by the Chair of the delegation, Mr Howitt.

Freedom of Religion or Belief 26 May 2011

UN Special rapporteur on this subject, Professor Heiner Bielefeldt spoke, inter alia, on Baha'i and Buddhist issues. The progress achieved in the UN Human Rights Council was noted and recent resolutions of both Council and Parliament confirmed that this issue has now taken on global importance.

The EU was called upon to put more EEAS resources into efforts to protect freedom of religion and to develop a "tool kit" for EU action around the world.



<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/DROI>
droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu

Arab Peninsula
 26 May 2011

Vincent Forest, Frontline, and Rouba Al-Fattal, co-founder of the Euro-Arab Forum, addressed members, referring to the dramatic deterioration of human rights throughout the region.

A delegation from Bahrain's Shura Council and the Council of Representatives, led by Dr Salah Ali, were also present for this discussion. Questions were put to the delegation concerning the death sentence passed against four Bahraini protestors, on which President Buzek had made a statement :

"I condemn the sentencing to death of the four protestors in Bahrain and I call for their sentences to be reviewed. The fact that the trial took place behind closed doors is deplorable. The EU is opposed to the death penalty in all cases and under all circumstances."

Syria
 26 May 2011



New technology allowed the Subcommittee to hear, via Skype, from Haytham Al-Maleh, a leading Human Rights lawyer (and former political prisoner) in Syria. Mr Al-Maleh informed members on the situation of human rights defenders in Syria. His son, Iyas Maleh, also commented on this subject.

An NGO expert, Nadim Houry, Human Rights Watch senior researcher for Syria and Lebanon, also took part via video link from the EU delegation in Beirut. The enormity of the scale of violence which the Assad regime is inflicting on the Syrian people was confirmed (not just shooting on the street but also cutting off water supply to towns outside government control).

The EEAS confirmed the EU delegation was remaining in touch with civil society.

Mention was also made of the fact that the EP facebook page was massively spammed with comments in support of Assad.

Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe
 9 June 2011

At this extraordinary meeting in Strasbourg, members from both DROI and LIBE exchanged views with Thomas Hammarberg. A constructive dialogue with the Commissioner and a broad consensus among members regarding cooperation between the EU and the CoE in the area of human rights characterised this meeting. Subjects discussed included the EU accession to the ECHR, Roma minority issues, illegal migrants from Libya, gender issues and the role of media in the context of human rights. The Commissioner agreed with a need for closer cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe with the Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review on individual countries.





<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/DROI>
droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu

**EU Annual report on Human Rights 2010
and developments concerning the review
of the EU Human Rights Policy**
14 June 2011

Concerning the **EU Annual Report** it was stated very clearly by the EEAS that this will be adopted in time for presentation to plenary in July.

With regard to the **EU Human Rights Policy**, the EEAS informed DROI that the process is still underway and a debate would not be possible in July. The Director of Human Rights Watch, Brussels, Lotte Leicht, highlighted essential aspects the review must include if it is to be credible. It should be ambitious, she said, the strongest EU statement so far in terms of purpose, policy and commitment to human rights based on international law and systems. Human rights should be described as universal, not just European values. Commitment to this policy must be made at the highest political level and there must be accountability mechanisms to ensure it is implemented. The European Parliament must have a role in it and a Special Representative of the HR/VP on human rights must be nominated, as the EP has repeatedly asked for.

Preventing genocide and mass atrocities
14 June 2011

The Subcommittee heard from the UN Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, Mr Francis Deng, and Mr Grörgy Tatár from the Foundation for the Budapest Centre for the International Prevention of Genocide.

Mr Deng gave a brief outline of his work with regard to the prevention of genocide and on the work being done on the responsibility to protect. Mr Deng stressed that genocide, whilst a hideous crime, was also a highly sensitive issue with both perpetrators and those expected to intervene to put a stop to these crimes tending to be "in denial". His focus had been on "demystifying" the crime and on how to protect and analysing information to help assess the risk of genocide in given situations. He spoke of three pillars: the responsibility of the state to protect its citizens; support from the international community to help states; and in cases where the state fails, the international community adopts a more assertive role.

Mr Tatár spoke on the Hungarian Presidency initiative on genocide prevention. He stressed that while genocide is the most extreme case on the scale of human rights violations, it was preventable. He also drew attention to genocide as a highly political issue, with perpetrators often being "at the highest levels", and hence that dialogue had to take place at the highest levels also.

Véronique Arnault, EEAS gave a forthright assessment of the EU's approach to genocide prevention, referring to the various tools available to facilitate the move from "early warning to early action", the different EU watch-lists and the need to be able to use this information to act quickly.



<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/DROI>
droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu

Hearing on the occasion of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
 15 June 2011

In view of the International Day in support of victims of torture, DROI heard from two experts, Hina Jilani, human rights advocate and lawyer of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, specializing in constitutional law and Eric Sottas, Secretary General of the World Organization Against Torture. Both speakers confirmed the renewed prevalence of torture around the world, highlighting this as an element in a misjudged counter-terrorism policy being adopted by a number of countries. The militarisation of the state was another disturbing trend.



The DROI Chair welcomed the news that the Committee on Civil Liberties had commissioned a study on parliamentary oversight of intelligence agencies.

Current Reports and Opinions

- **Draft report on the EU external policies in favour of Democratisation 2011/2032(INI), rapporteur Véronique De Keyser**

Consideration of draft report : 14 April 2011
 Deadline for tabling amendments: 10 May 2011 at noon

Consideration of amendments in AFET: 25 May 2011
 Vote in AFET: 6 June 2011
 Plenary: July

- **Draft opinion to the LIBE committee on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Regulation (EC) No. 2007/2004 establishing a European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX), rapporteur: Barbara Lochbihler**

Deadline for tabling amendments: 27 October at 12 noon
 Second discussion in DROI: 10 January 2011
 Vote in AFET: 13 January 2011 - adopted
 Vote in LIBE: 12 July
 Plenary: September I

Human Rights related resolutions/texts adopted in plenary in April, May and June 2011

April, Strasbourg

- The case of Ai WeiWei in China
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Situation in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen
- Ban on the elections for the Tibetan government in exile in Nepal
- Zimbabwe

May, Strasbourg

- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Sri Lanka: follow-up of the UN report



<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/DROI>
droi-secretariat@europarl.europa.eu

June, Strasbourg

- Sudan and South Sudan
- EU-Russia summit
- Madagascar
- Guantánamo: imminent death penalty decision
- Ukraine: the cases of Yulia Tymoshenko and other members of the former government

LINKS

[EP LIVE](#)

[Europarl TV](#)

[Studies on human rights](#)

Link to [resolutions](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS IN DROI

- Hearing on LGBTI rights, (30 June)
- Exchange of views with Serhiy Holovaty, Second Vice Chair, and Dick Marty, member of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Council of Europe, (7 July, in Strasbourg)
- Exchange of views with the Chair of Committee of the Senate of Poland, (11 July)
- China, the situation of human rights defenders (11 July)
- Hearing on ICC (12 July)

Next DROI Meetings in 2011

Thursday, 30 June, 09h00-12h30
Thursday, 7 July, 09h00-11h00 - Strasbourg
Monday, 11 July, 15h00-18h30
Tuesday, 12 July, 09h00-12h30
Monday, 19 September, 15h00-18h30
Monday, 3 October, 15h00-18h30
Tuesday, 4 October, 09h00-12h30