



2014 European Elections: For a Europe of Human rights

Brussels, 5th March 2014

Next May, European Parliament elections will take place. In this context, we, the member organisations of the European Association for the Defense of Human Rights (AEDH), express our major concern about the current drift of the European Union and its institutions.

Citizens show little conviction in the run-up to these elections as European institutions continuously appear more distant and alien to the needs and concerns of the population and as they are perceived as the direct source of the reduction and loss of hard-won rights.

The growing subordination of European politics and their leaders to economic and financial powers is to blame for this loss of confidence and the rejection of the EU by citizens. Since the beginning of the crisis, caused by the greed and the lack of control of the financial sector, the EU has only put in place austerity policies with the aim of the payment of the debt and substantial reduction of deficits.

The consequences are visible: increased unemployment and job insecurity across Europe rise in poverty and inequality, destruction of basic public services such as education and healthcare. All this has a particularly strong impact on the Southern European countries whose economies have been affected in such a way that an unprecedented social catastrophe is developing.

In general, the economic and social rights are the most challenged by these policies based exclusively on the wish to serve the interests of banks, large transnational corporations and the financial sector, at the expense of the persons and forgetting their rights.

Therefore, the disaffection of European citizens with the upcoming elections is hardly surprising. They do not feel involved because many of the founding ideas of the European project are forgotten or even dismantled.

Nor is it surprising that, in this context of confusion and disappointment, nationalism is worryingly developing and that the foundations of the EU, such as the free movement between the Member States are infringed. It is the very concept of European citizenship that is slowly being emptied of its meaning.

Citizens' freedoms and civic and political rights are being eroded, as in the case of massive espionage of personal data and the violations of the right to privacy.

The same is for women's rights, challenged in some countries serving as an excuse for others not to take steps forward and to maintain inequality and discrimination.

The principle of asylum, another foundation of the Union, is gradually being dismantled and immigrants are treated in a cruel and inhumane way. Europe becomes thus a Fortress building increasingly higher walls at its borders.

In this context, an aggressive populism promoting xenophobic and anti-European ideas is evolving dangerously and quickly at the risk of having a key role within the Assembly elected in May.

However, all this could go differently!

We, the member organizations of the European Association for the Defence of Human Rights, are firmly convinced of it and have launched the campaign "A Europe of rights: here, now, for all!" With this campaign, we would like to remind the elected politicians that their role is to defend the rights of individuals. That they cannot continue to allow that a world is constructed in which the individuals are at the service of the power, of profit and benefits in a "casino" economy.

We would like to remind them that economic policies are to give every person a roof, decent work, access to equal education for everyone, universal access to health care. It is time to promote economic and social rights, the destruction of which only serves the scandalous incomes of a few. It is time to defend civic and political rights instead of trying to avoid the protest and mobilisation of citizens and to make Europe inaccessible to those who ask for shelter and refuge.

We want a different discourse and other actions! We want the elected to show loyalty, to be accountable to us, not to neglect the needs of the population, not to neglect ethics by engaging in insulting behavior, we want them to humanise life, not to leave the door open to authoritarian political attempts and to stop closing the door to the free exercise of the rights of individuals.

As AEDH we believe that we cannot leave it all in the sole hands of elected politicians. Thus, this campaign is also a call to citizenship, to social involvement and mobilisation as only way to build a Europe of rights, justice, and freedoms.





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The European Association for the Defence of Human Rights (Association Européenne pour la défense des Droits de l'Homme - AEDH) consists of associations and leagues defending human rights in the countries of the European Union. AEDH is an associate member of the International Federation of Human Rights (Fédération internationale pour la défense des droits de l'Homme - FIDH). For more information, visit www.aedh.eu.