



Points of contact and sources of information

Coordination:

- Secretariat of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid
www.bundestag.de
menschenrechtsausschuss@bundestag.de

Support:

- Working groups on human rights and humanitarian aid in the parliamentary groups
- German delegation to the Interparliamentary Union
- German delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- German delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE

Human rights organisations:

- amnesty international
www.amnesty.de
- Human Rights Watch
www.hrw.org



Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians

A German Bundestag campaign on behalf of threatened and persecuted politicians

Human rights defenders in politics need your protection

No one advocating the implementation and observance of human rights in Germany runs any risk in doing so. There is no threat of punishment nor is there any danger involved. In many other countries, however, people who defend human rights can themselves become the victims of human rights abuses.

Lawyers, journalists, trade unionists and representatives of women's organisations, ethnic and religious minorities and indigenous peoples are under particular threat as defenders of human rights.

Politicians are also among the defenders of human rights who are at risk. They can be elected representatives, opposition politicians or mayors and they frequently carry on their activities under very difficult political conditions. Exercising their right of free speech is mostly their sole offence. The criticism they voice makes them a thorn in the flesh of both state agencies in countries where the human rights situation is problematical and of paramilitary groups. They are frequently slandered, threatened, removed from office, subjected to arbitrary arrest, sentenced for "subversive" activities, tortured and murdered even. Many people who have made themselves unpopular "disappear" for ever. The offenders are seldom convicted.

The members of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid have therefore launched the Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians campaign. The basic idea is that parliamentarians who can exercise their mandate in safety should help their fellow-parliamentarians who are at risk in other countries.

In passing the cross-party motion on the protection of threatened human rights defenders in December 2003 the German Bundestag has undertaken to participate in the Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians campaign. In this way, it is fulfilling the voluntary commitment it made in the framework of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to make a contribution to the protection and promotion of human rights. This campaign represents a milestone in solidarity between German and foreign politicians and a significant contribution to a credible human rights policy.

What can you do as Members of the German Bundestag for your fellow parliamentarians abroad?

As Members of the Bundestag you have a network of international contacts that you can use in favour of your fellow parliamentarians who are at risk. The Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians campaign is to be carried out not just by the members of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, who have already been actively involved on behalf of many victims of human rights abuses. On the contrary, all the Members of the Bundestag are called upon to participate irrespective of their areas of expertise.

The secretariat of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid will tell you whether opposition politicians are under threat in a country you have contacts with or are intending to visit and what you can best do to support them. In cooperation with the Federal Foreign Office, the Interparliamentary Union and non-governmental organisations the secretariat compiles lists with the names of threatened or persecuted human rights defenders in the field of politics in the relevant country.

You should use this information to decide how you can best help your fellow parliamentarian without posing any additional threat to the person concerned. The motion on the protection of threatened human rights defenders proposes various courses of action:

- drawing attention at home and abroad to threatened and detained human rights defenders during talks with political decision-makers and in petition letters and urging that they be protected or released;
- paying tribute to the commitment of human rights defenders when abroad by talking personally to them wherever possible, visiting them in prison, calling for them to be given a fair trial or observing court proceedings;
- ascertaining whether special partnerships can help to support threatened fellow parliamentarians abroad.

You can also use the information provided by the Committee secretariat to offer support from within Germany. It provides a sound basis for petitions and talks with political decision-makers from countries in which human rights are violated.

To ensure that the information and the lists of names are kept up to date it is of the utmost importance that, after having had talks or travelled abroad, you should report to the secretariat of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid on your impressions and the activities you engaged in and make recommendations on future procedure.

Your active involvement will undoubtedly prove worthwhile, because human rights throughout the world would be in a sorry state without the courage and perseverance of those who defend them.