

# Human Rights Without Frontiers: 30 years of fighting totalitarianism

EU Today (18.07.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2uCzliW> – On 20 June, Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF) held a reception in Brussels to celebrate its 30 years of existence. Dozens of partners, collaborators, former staff, and volunteers who had contributed to its growth over the last three decades were in attendance, writes Willy Fautré, founder and executive director of Human Rights Without Frontiers.

In 1988, the year which marked of the 40th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a group of Brussels-based human rights activists launched HRWF, with a lot of faith and no funding. At that time, there were no mobile telephones, internet, or social media... It was another world. One of the initial main objectives of the organisation was to highlight political and religious persecution in European Communist countries and to help human rights defenders in the Soviet Bloc.

In June 1988, they published the first issue of a magazine in French named “Droits de l’Homme sans Frontières”. At that time, Western Europe was under constant threat of Soviet nuclear attack. Unsurprisingly, the first magazine issue covered a summit between Reagan and Gorbachev in Moscow. On that occasion, Reagan had invited 100 Soviet dissidents to the US embassy in the Soviet capital, an unthinkable move after 70 years of communism in the USSR. Also unthinkable at that time was the idea that 18 months later the Iron Curtain would unexpectedly fall and Communist totalitarianism would collapse.

In subsequent issues, the magazine dealt with the apartheid

regime in South Africa, Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the genocide in Rwanda, religious persecution in China, and many other human rights issues around the world.

Throughout its 30 years of existence, HRWF has adapted itself to a fast-changing world, to the expansion of the European Union, and to the development of new communication technologies. HRWF now distributes a well-known daily newsletters to more than 10,000 recipients, which serves as an early alert tool meant to sensitize members of the European Parliament, EU member states, think tanks, journalists, and embassies in Brussels, Geneva, New York and Washington to pressing human rights news. HRWF organizes conferences at the European Parliament and regularly advocates human rights in academic seminars, at the UN in Geneva, and at the OSCE.

In the 21st century, the world is now facing new threats, new forms of warfare, and new forms of totalitarianism. One of them is Islamic totalitarianism, an ideology that first wants to radically change the existing nature of Muslim-majority states into some form of a theocratic regime dominated by a radical and retrograde form of Islam. This ideology seeks to change the structures of pluralistic civil societies into societies to be ruled with an iron hand by one religious worldview imported from the Arabic peninsula.

Islamic totalitarianism wants daily life and the behaviours of each individual to be dominated by one religious worldview, as did the late Communist ideology with the political philosophy of Marx and Engels.

Islamic totalitarianism, mainly but not exclusively embodied by ISIS, is a political ideology which instrumentalises the Quran to create an alternative and challenging system of political governance. It is definitely not a religion. Its siren song divides and fragments Muslim communities around the world, and the primary 'collateral victims' of its fight for

power are Muslims themselves, who in many countries adhere to a historically peaceful Islam. Christians in Muslim-majority countries are a second category of 'collateral victims'. EU member states are also targeted, suffering from terrorist attacks and the radicalization of young Muslims.

The Islamic totalitarian virus spreads gender segregation and discrimination, the division of society into new social castes, hate speech, anti-Semitism, and many other 'social diseases'. It is infecting the software of the ummah and is trying to infect humankind. Antidotes need to be administered and vaccinations have to be discovered, a challenge to the political researchers and engineers of the defense and security of the EU and of human rights.

Combating Islamic totalitarianism with ideas, with words and in practice is not only legitimate but it is obligatory, it is a duty for the EU and human rights organizations for it is a fight for human dignity, equality, and human rights for all.

By Willy Fautré, founder and executive director of Human Rights Without Frontiers

*This article was published in EU Today under the unfortunate title "EU member states targeted by radicalization of young Muslims"*

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**Newly released: Human Rights in Morocco: Achievements and**

# Challenges Ahead



## [Human Rights in Morocco: Achievements and Challenges Ahead](#)

This report of *Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l* first describes the mandate, the structures and the activities of the CNDH. This driving force, with 13 regional committees, has had and is having a real positive impact on freedom of association and assembly, domestic violence, woman's rights, and children's rights, just to name a few. Each of these issues is covered in this report, taking stock of the criticisms expressed by domestic civil society organizations and the international community, describing the dynamics towards positive changes, and outlining the remaining obstacles to overcome in order to achieve satisfactory results *de jure* and in practice.

[Read report](#)

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# US quits 'biased' UN human rights council

BBC (20.06.2018) – <https://bbc.in/2tiif8o> – The US has pulled out of the United Nations Human Rights Council, calling it a “cesspool of political bias”.

The “hypocritical and self-serving” body “makes a mockery of human rights”, said US envoy to the UN Nikki Haley.

Formed in 2006, the Geneva-based council has been criticised for allowing countries with questionable human rights records to be members.

But activists said the US move could hurt efforts to monitor and address human rights abuses around the world.

Ms Haley announced her country’s intention to quit the council at a joint news conference with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who called the council “a poor defender of human rights”.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, in a statement released through his spokesman, responded by saying he would have “much preferred” the US to remain in the council.

The UN human rights commissioner, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, called the US withdrawal "disappointing, if not really surprising, news". Israel, meanwhile, has praised the decision.

The move comes amid intense criticism over the Trump administration's policy of separating child migrants from their parents at the US-Mexico border.

On Monday [Mr Hussein has called the policy "unconscionable"](#).

### ***More dismay among allies***

This is just the latest rejection of multilateralism by the Trump administration, and will likely unsettle those who look to the United States to protect and promote human rights around the world.

The United States has always had a conflicting relationship with the UN Human Rights Council. The Bush Administration decided to boycott the council when it was created in 2006 for many of the same reasons cited by the Trump administration.

The then UN ambassador was John Bolton – who is currently President Trump's national security adviser and a strong

critic of the UN.

It wasn't until years later, in 2009, that the United States re-joined under the Obama administration.

Many allies have tried to convince the United States to remain in the council. Even many who agree with Washington's long standing criticisms of the body believe the United States should actively work to reform it from within, rather than disengaging.

### ***What is the UN Human Rights Council?***

The UN set up the council in 2006 to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights, which faced widespread criticism for letting countries with poor human rights records become members.

A group of 47 elected countries from different global regions serve for three-year terms on the council.

The UNHRC meets three times a year, and reviews the human rights records of all UN members in a special process the council says gives countries the chance to say what they have done to improve human rights, known as [the Universal Periodic Review](#).

The council also sends out independent experts and has set up

commissions of inquiry to report on human rights violations in countries including Syria, North Korea, Burundi, Myanmar and South Sudan.

### ***Why has the US decided to quit?***

The decision to leave the body follows years of US criticism.

The country initially refused to join the council in 2006, arguing that, like the old commission, the UNHRC had admitted nations with questionable human rights records.

It only joined in 2009 under President Barack Obama, and [won re-election to the council in 2012](#).

But human rights groups voiced fresh complaints about the body in 2013, after [China, Russia, Saudia Arabia, Algeria and Vietnam were elected members](#).

This followed [Israel's unprecedented boycott of one of the council's reviews](#), alleging unfair criticism from the body.

Last year, [Nikki Haley told the council it was "hard to accept" that resolutions had been passed against Israel yet none had been considered for Venezuela](#), where dozens of protesters had been killed during political turmoil.



Israel is the only country that is subject to a permanent standing agenda item, meaning its treatment of the Palestinians is regularly scrutinised.

On Tuesday, despite her harsh words for the UNHRC, Ms Haley said she wanted “to make it crystal clear that this step is not a retreat from our human rights commitments”.

### ***What's been the reaction?***

Some countries and diplomats were quick to express disappointment about the US withdrawal.

The UNHRC's current president, Slovenian ambassador Vojislav Suc, said the body was the only one “responding to human rights issues and situations worldwide”.

After the US decision to quit, he said, “it is essential that we uphold a strong and vibrant council”.

[UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said the decision was “regrettable”](#), arguing that while reforms are needed, the UNHRC is “crucial to holding states to account”.

A number of charities and aid groups criticised the move, with the American Civil Liberties Union saying the Trump administration was leading a “concerted, aggressive effort to

violate basic human rights”.

The New York-based group Human Rights Watch condemned the US decision to leave the council and called President Trump’s human rights policy “one-dimensional”.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quick to support the measure, posting a number of tweets praising the country’s “courageous decision”.

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**UK: Suicides raise alarm about UK’s treatment of child**

# refugees

## *Three Eritrean teenagers killed themselves after travelling to Britain without their parents*

The Guardian (17.06.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2t5DQ4E> – At least three teenage refugees who arrived in Britain from the migrant camp in Calais have killed themselves in the past six months, raising questions about how the Home Office and local authorities handle profoundly vulnerable asylum-seeking children and young people in the UK.

Three young men from Eritrea, two of them aged 18 and one aged 19, have taken their own lives in London since last November. All of them fled conflict in Eritrea, travelling without their parents across Africa and Europe as young teenagers, and all spent time in the Calais migrant camp. A fourth young asylum seeker from Eritrea whose name and age has not been made public is also known to have killed himself last year.

Filmon Yemane had recently turned 18 when he killed himself in November. Alexander Tekle, also 18, took his own life a fortnight later in December, a year after he had arrived in the UK, hidden in the back of a refrigerated lorry. A third teenager, N (whom the Guardian is not naming, at the request of his family), killed himself last month, aged 19, in the same hostel in north London where Yemane had stayed.

An inquest was held into Yemane's death in April. It highlighted that he was in a state of crisis in the 24 hours before he took his own life, and found that although employees

at the sheltered accommodation where he lived had reported a deterioration in his condition to NHS mental health staff, their concerns were not “escalated appropriately within the crisis team”. A pre-inquest hearing was held into Tekle’s death last month; there is no date yet for the full hearing, and no scheduled inquest yet into the third young man’s death.

In the absence of other inquest findings, it is impossible to assess what prompted the three teenagers, who were acquainted with each other, to end their lives. All of them had been through extremely traumatic experiences, having fled conflict and encountered multiple dangers on the way to the UK, not least in the often violent environment of Calais, and risked their lives when they attempted to enter Britain by smuggling themselves on to lorries and trains. However, people who knew them have said that they subsequently found the protracted process of applying for refugee status in the UK extremely stressful.

Hamid, another Eritrean asylum-seeking teenager, who knew all three teenagers, said Alexander Tekle and N, the young man who killed himself last month, were both extremely concerned about the length of time it was taking for the Home Office to decide on whether they would be granted refugee status here. Hamid asked for his real name not to be printed, afraid that speaking out might somehow complicate his own asylum claim, which still remains unresolved, three years after his arrival in the UK at the age of 15.

He said: “Alex and I were close friends. He was such a nice guy but he was giving up on life. He was stressing about Home Office things – we all were. I tried to tell him not to worry too much, but he was thinking about it all the time. He was

saying: once you have your papers, you can start your life, you can start college. He wanted to start work; he wanted to send money to his mother. Without papers you can't work."

He was unsure about whether Yemane had ongoing concerns about his Home Office status, but he knew that the third young person, N, was very anxious about whether he was going to be accepted as a refugee. "He was worried about Home Office and being sent back to his country and stressing about that," he said.

The Home Office is understood not to be currently sending people back to Eritrea, because it is considered too dangerous; however child asylum seekers who turn 18 and are not granted refugee status remain in limbo, unable to work, or study, and liable to be sent to immigration detention centres if they do not leave the country voluntarily.

Benjamin Hunter met Tekle while doing volunteer work with refugees in Calais when Tekle had just turned 16. He stayed in touch with him when he travelled to England. "Alex experienced deeply traumatic events on his journey to the UK, in particular in Libya and in Calais, where he lived alone in a tent for as long as a year, subject to abuse and neglect," Hunter said.

Tekle was wrongly age-assessed on arrival in the UK; it was not easy to get his birth certificate sent from Eritrea, although the documents were eventually sent. For a while he was treated as an adult, and sent to live in a unit for adults where he experienced real difficulties, Hunter said. Since

arriving in the UK Tekle had at times been homeless, and occasionally drank heavily as a way of alleviating the stress, Hunter said.

“Instead of receiving the support and help that he desperately needed, upon his arrival in the UK, he told he was not eligible for support as a child or care-leaver. He was placed outside of care, in a hostel for adult asylum seekers where he was violently assaulted,” he said. “Alex was stressed about the wellbeing of his family, about the uncertainty of his future and in particular was stressed by his asylum claim and the thought that he might be deported. The last thing he said to me, the day before he died, was, ‘Why have I not received my papers, like my friends have?’”

His father, Tecle Sium Tesfamichel, a refugee now living in Sudan, said: “Alexander is not coming back. But I want to know this doesn’t happen to children and young people again. These children, who have to leave home through no fault of their own, are traumatised on their journey through the desert and the sea. It is the job of the authorities to look after and guide these children, who come to the UK alone. They shouldn’t come to die.”

The family’s lawyers, Bhatt Murphy, would like the coroner to examine the actions of the local authorities responsible for him, the adequacy of his accommodation, of the age assessments, and of access to mental health services.

An Eritrean woman who works with young asylum seekers (who asked not to be named) said she observed many different

pressures making life hard for newly arrived teenagers. “The journey, then the welcome and reception they get here is not what they expected,” she said. “They feel like they are unwanted.

“Everything is so different from how they have lived at home. The loneliness, the language barrier; they are placed in accommodation with no one to talk to.”

The mental health problems experienced by unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have been well documented by refugee organisations and children’s charities.

Sam Royston, policy director at the Children’s Society, which has been carrying out new research into the mental health of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the UK, said: “These vulnerable young people may have experienced the trauma of war, persecution, bereavement and exploitation, all of which can have a huge impact upon their mental health. Too often, they do not get the help they need ... Practitioners we spoke to knew of young people who had sadly self-harmed and attempted suicide.”

A study by the children’s commissioner last year warned that Home Office delays in processing asylum claims were causing difficulties. “Testimony from migrant children demonstrates how the experience of uncertainty and waiting leads to a state of paralysis and depression, seriously undermining their wellbeing,” the report states.

Elaine Chase, an academic who has interviewed more than 60 unaccompanied young migrants in the UK for the research project, *Becoming Adult*, said about a third of the people she spoke to had experienced mental health difficulties ranging from difficulties sleeping, anxiety, severe depression to suicidal feelings, often related to uncertainty about their Home Office status. "One 18-year-old attempted suicide and ended up in a mental health unit, and was then billed for his healthcare and told he had to leave the country," she said.

Her colleague on the research project Jennifer Allsopp said the migrants interviewed tended to be more troubled about the uncertainty they faced about their futures than by the trauma they had experienced in the past. "For them, good mental health is associated with being able to work towards future aspirations; having a sense of stability, moving onwards with their lives. It is very hard to do that, if not impossible, without security of legal status," she said.

Rosalind Compton, an immigration solicitor with the charity Coram Children's Legal Centre, who runs advice sessions for asylum-seeking children, said many were under extreme stress. She said she knew an 18-year-old who had attempted suicide in December after being refused asylum. "There needs to be significantly improved mental health support available for all asylum-seeking young people," she said. "Mental health support is delayed or made ineffective by Home Office delays."

Liz Clegg met Alexander Tekle during the two years she spent working in Calais, supporting child migrants in the camp. She now runs a centre in Birmingham to support those who have arrived in the UK. "He was lovely. I remember him getting in the car and singing along to the radio. He came across like a



genuine, funny, sociable boy," she said. She said many young people were destroyed by spending a long time in Calais trying to get to Britain. Those who spent only a few days in the camp tended to be in a better state when they arrived here.

"It had a profound effect on them and then there's a delusional notion that it will all be OK when you get to the UK. That can be the final nail. You've held on and held on, you've kept going and you've got here, and then you realise that the dream is not the dream," she said.

Britain gives temporary leave to remain to all minors who arrive here, but those who are found ineligible for refugee status are asked to begin making plans to return to their home country when they turn 17 and a half. Many of them struggle to gather the correct evidence to show that they should be eligible for refugee status; it can be difficult to access legal advice. "You have to have evidence that you need refugee protection," Clegg said.

"It's a nightmare process, and they don't understand it. None of these children read the Geneva convention or had the slightest idea of the asylum process. For many of them, they so believed that they could get to the UK and everything would be all right, and then they get rejected. It's hugely stressful. The whole hostile immigration environment is turned towards them. If you are told you can be here only until you are 17 and a half, it's inhumane – it's a form of abuse."

A Home Office spokesperson said: "We recognise that some unaccompanied asylum-seeking children have fled persecution in

their countries of origin and experienced potentially dangerous journeys before reaching the UK. We are committed to reaching asylum decisions as quickly as we can, while ensuring these often complex cases are given proper consideration. Unaccompanied children are looked after by local authority children's services, who are required to assess their individual needs, including access to mental health support."

Hamid, who has seen three teenagers in his circle take their own lives in the space of six months, said he still struggled to understand why they decided to give up on life. "Alex was so generous, he would give me his last money; he gave me his clothes. If he had only £1 he would buy two drinks – one for him and one for you. He would share everything with you."

He remains extremely concerned about his own immigration status and has recently received a Home Office letter informing him that he is a "person without leave", liable for detention and possible removal from the country. The letter states: "You are not allowed to WORK. You are not allowed to STUDY."

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# ECJ / EU: European Court of Justice recognises freedom of movement for same-sex couples

**Judgment** : <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=202542&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=req&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=321364>

EP Intergroup on LGBT Rights (05.06.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2HogStQ> – In a [ground-breaking judgement](#), today the [Court of Justice of the European Union](#) recognised freedom of movement for same-sex couples.

“The term ‘spouse’ within the meaning of the provisions of EU law on freedom of residence for EU citizens and their family members includes spouses of the same sex” says the Luxembourg Court in a [press release](#) published today.

The case was brought to the Luxembourg court by Adrian Coman, a Romanian-American national who married his partner in Belgium. After several years of living abroad, Adrian Coman moved back to Romania with his spouse. However, Clai Hamilton was denied a residence permit on the ground of family reunion, because Romanian law does not recognise same-sex marriages or partnership contracted abroad.

According to the European Court of Justice, a EU citizen who used their right to freedom of movement, moved to another Member State and established their family life there, should be able to return to their home country with their partner –

including their same-sex partner they married in another EU state. [Article 21\(1\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU guarantees the right to freedom of movement for all EU citizens, and EU national cannot be subjected to stricter conditions than those laid in the Directive 2004/38. Since the term 'spouse' is gender-neutral in the Directive 2004/38, this therefore applies to same-sex couples.

[Daniele Viotti](#), co-chair of the LGBTI Intergroup, said: "Today is a historic day. All families should benefit from the right to freedom of movement, guaranteed by the treaties of the European Union."

Adrian Coman and Clai Hamilton are only one of the many couples that have suffered from this discrimination based on sexual orientation. It is now clear: when a marriage is contracted in one EU state, it should be recognised in all other Member States. Same-sex marriage is no exception."

The Coman case makes clear that freedom of movement may be restricted by a Member States, but under control of the EU institutions. The measures must be proportional and compatible with the fundamental rights guaranteed by the [Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union](#). However with regards to the Coman case, "the obligation for a Member State to recognise a marriage between persons of the same sex concluded in another Member State in accordance with the law of that state, for the sole purpose of granting a derived right of residence to a third-country national, does not undermine the institution of marriage in the first Member State, [...] does not require that Member State to provide, in its national law, for the institution of marriage between persons of the same sex, [...] and does not undermine the national identity or pose a threat to the public policy of the Member State concerned." (para. 45-46).

[Sophie in't Veld](#), vice-president of the LGBTI Intergroup, said "While this calls for celebration, we must stress that much

remains to be done for Rainbow Families in the European Union. Too few countries allow same-sex couples to enter registered partnerships, let alone marriage. These families remain unrecognised and unprotected by law.

It is now up to politicians to take the matter in their hands and introduce marriage equality soon”.

The LGBTI Intergroup will organise an event in the European Parliament on 20 June to discuss the aftermath of the Coman case.

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## **INDONESIA: Islamic hardliners**

# detain transwomen

The Observers (30.05.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2J5qviM> – In West Java, Indonesia, a group of Islamic hardliners patrolling the town of Cianjur harassed and physically restrained four transgender women last Friday. All the while, police officers accompanying the group on their patrol simply looked on. A video of this scene has since circulated online.

Last week, men were patrolling an area of Cianjur called Cilaku, on the lookout for alcohol and for food stalls open during the day during the holy month of Ramadan, [according to the local police chief](#). Some of the men in the patrol belonged to the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), a self-appointed morality brigade known for its violent tactics, including attacks on bars and on people [selling food during Ramadan](#).

At one point, as the video shows, they started harassing two transwomen. They then forced their way into a building, shouting all the while, and brought out two more transwomen. All four were lined up against a wall outside, and surrounded by the large group of men, who continued to shout at them. One of the men preached loudly and forced them to repeat a promise that they would stop dressing in a feminine way.

[Coconuts Jakarta](#), an online news site, translated one of the men's orders to the transwomen: "Go ahead and sing, but wear macho outfits so that nobody will be attracted."

At the end of the video, a man splashes water from a bottle onto the transwomen's faces, and orders them to wash away

their make-up.

At several points in the video, a uniformed police officer can be seen standing in the group of men, watching the scene.

The Cianjur police chief confirmed to [local media](#) that police officers were present during this incident, but said they hadn't done anything wrong; he claimed their presence had ensured the situation remained "safe and conducive".

While there are no laws against being transgender in Indonesia, transgender people are regularly targets of violence, harassment and discrimination. In May, a video circulated showing police officers publicly shaming transwomen in Aceh province.

Naila Rizqi Zakiah is a public defender with LBH Masyarakat, a Jakarta-based NGO that works with marginalised communities, including the LGBT community.

*We are in contact with friends in the area where this video was filmed, who have assured us that the transwomen have moved to a safe place. We are now trying to get into contact with the victims to talk to them about helping them press charges. In any case, we intend to file a complaint.*

*This sort of incident is unfortunately quite common, and is happening in many areas all over Indonesia. What you see in this video is an example of the repressive attitude of both*

*government and society toward LGBT people in Indonesia.*

*We carried out research on cases of harassment and discrimination of LGBT people throughout 2017. We counted that last year there were 973 such cases that were reported in the media. We found that 26 percent of victims were targeted because they were gay or lesbian, while nearly 74 percent were targeted because they were transgender.*

*We also noted who the perpetrators were: in 55 percent of cases, they were from law enforcement or government agencies, while in 45 percent of cases they were from civil society.*

*“Even progressive parties aren’t speaking out against abuses faced by the LGBT community”*

*It’s a very alarming situation. The Islamic Defenders Front has become a sort of moral police, targeting the LGBT community as well as all sorts of ethnic and religious minorities. Unfortunately, the police tend to agree and support these groups who want to punish what they call the “immoral community”. [Editor’s Note: a [recent survey](#) showed that 87 percent of Indonesians considered the LGBT community “a threat to private or public life”.]*

*Several events have taken place in the last few years that have worsened the climate for LGBT people in Indonesia. In 2016, LGBT groups were [barred](#) from universities. In 2017, a conservative group called the Family Love Alliance brought a petition to the Constitutional Court to try to criminalise*



homosexuality. The court [rejected it](#), but now our country's parliament is considering a ban.

There are so many politicians and civil society leaders who talk about wanting to criminalise homosexuality. I think cases like the one we saw in the video will keep happening if they keep stoking anti-LGBT sentiment. And at the moment, with regional elections coming up in June, even progressive parties aren't speaking out against abuses faced by the LGBT community.

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**AZERBAIJAN: Prisoners' pardoning disappoints rights**

# defenders

Caucasian Knot (24.05.2018)  
– <http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/43274/> – Today, Ilham Aliev, President of Azerbaijan, has signed a decree to pardon 634 convicts; however, it touched only 12 persons from the list of political prisoners; many of them were near their release time without pardoning, rights defenders assert.

The "[Caucasian Knot](#)" has reported that by May 18, the pardoning commission had examined 1100 appeals and prepared, for the Azerbaijani President, an amnesty list dated to May 28, the Republic Day.

According to the decree "On pardoning a Number of Convicts on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Azerbaijani People's Republic", 607 out of 634 inmates are released from jails today, on the date of signing, the "[Caucasian Knot](#)" correspondent has reported.

According to *Bashir Suleimanly*, a member of the civil society working group on drawing up a unified list of political prisoners, the pardoning has again failed to solve the problem of political prisoners.

"Our list, published this March, contained 142 persons; and only 12 of them have been pardoned. They are mostly believers, who are not major political and public figures; and have served almost their entire terms," Mr Suleimanly told the "[Caucasian Knot](#)" correspondent:

Valekh Abdullayev, convicted along with a group of believers, who was arrested in May 2012 for protests against the holding of the Eurovision Song Contest in Baku, was released.

David Karimov and Elshad Rzayev, who were arrested after the protest against the prohibition of hijabs in October 2012, were also pardoned.

Seven people – Nadir Babayev, Aliaga Gasimov, Hilal Jabbarov, Alesker Gurbanov, Fail Shahbazov, Natig Shahbazov and Muhammad Guliyev – were convicted in connection with the Nardaran mass arrest in November 2015.

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# North Korea human rights

May 7, 2018

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President  
United States of America  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

During your State of the Union ("SOTU") Address, the whole world watched as you elevated the role that human rights should play with respect to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea ("DPRK"). We were heartened to see that you highlighted stories from the North Korean community, showcasing how each of their stories "is a testament to the yearning of every human soul to live in freedom". We could not agree more. Now, as the United States discusses a proposed summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, we urge you to include human rights issues in all discussions with the DPRK including in the summit agenda.

We strongly believe that the United States and others in the international community should not hold back on condemning human rights abuses in an effort to support diplomatic dialogues. The US, in close collaboration with rest of the international community, should bring diplomatic engagement and pressure on behalf of the people of the DPRK with regards to human rights issues. This would be consistent with both the imperative to protect and promote human rights, and the United States' efforts to protect the Korean peninsula from the effects of nuclear weapons.

As you described during the SOTU Address, any discussion about the nuclear threat North Korea poses cannot be separated from how the DPRK treats its own people. The United Nations Security Council has recognized in several recent debates and resolutions that human rights abuses in the DPRK are an important element of any discussion on the DPRK's nuclear weapons as the North Korean government continues to prioritize nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles over the basic needs of

its own people In December 2017, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein, said that "the international security crisis regarding the DPRK's military actions is inseparable from concerns about the human rights situation of ordinary people in the country." On March 12, 2018, at the UN Human Rights Council, Tomás Ojea-Quintana, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in DPRK, urged UN member states that "any advancement on the security dialogue should be accompanied by a parallel expansion of human rights dialogue." Any resolution of security issues on the Korean peninsula should require addressing the DPRK's repressive human rights record and pressing the North Korean government to commit to fundamental and wide-ranging reforms.

During 2017, there were some limited but important steps taken by the DPRK to re-engage with UN human rights mechanisms, creating a window of opportunity. According to Special Rapporteur Ojea-Quintana "the momentum is there for the negotiations to use and to bring the human rights issues into the discussion." Mr. President – we recommend that you use that opportunity, and urge the DPRK to improve its human rights record.

We ask that you include the following issues in the agenda of all meetings with the DPRK, including your summit with Kim Jong Un:

### **1. Acting on United Nations Human Rights Recommendations**

The UN Commission of Inquiry on DPRK found systematic and widespread human rights violations in North Korea, in many instances constituting crimes against humanity, including:

- The existence of a prison camp system where individuals deemed political enemies of the state, sometimes along with their entire families, are held indefinitely;
- Torture, forced labor, starvation and other ill-treatment, as well as executions used routinely in these camps and other penal facilities;
- For the vast majority of North Koreans, the denial of universally recognized human rights, including police interfering with religious activities, and to freedom of movement, expression, and association.
- The deliberate and systematic closing off of North Koreans from contact with the rest of the world by preventing them from traveling, unsupervised communications, and denying them access to outside information.

We recommend that you urge the DPRK to immediately implement the following steps by:

- Opening all government detention facilities, reeducation and forced labor camps, and prisons to visits by international observers, and taking steps to release any detainees held for activities that should not, under international law, be criminalized, such as exercising their rights to freedom of speech and religion and belief, or attempting to leave or leaving the country without permission.
- Engaging with and responding to recommendations and opinions from the UN Human Rights Council and the Commission of Inquiry on the situation of human rights in the DPRK and engaging with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, including facilitating a country visit by him and other relevant UN special mechanisms.
- Continuing to engage with UN human rights mechanisms, including the upcoming Universal Periodic Review and

under the Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; accepting UN recommendations and implementing changes on the ground; and signing and ratifying key human rights treaties, including International Labour Organization conventions and the Convention against Torture.

## **2. Appoint a Special Envoy for DPRK Human Rights Issues**

We urge you to appoint a Special Envoy for North Korea Human Rights Issues. By elevating the issue to a Special Envoy role, the position would coordinate a whole-of-government US strategy on bringing international pressure to bear on Pyongyang for improvements in human rights both at the summit and in conjunction with the United States' allies and partners. That responsibility should also include the following:

- To establish a regular US-North Korea human rights dialogue and ensure that it is principled, follows clear benchmarks, and is accountable. Such meetings should be followed by reports to Congress and public briefings about their content and agreements on next steps, which should include follow-up meetings at the highest levels of each government.
- Advocate further information and personal exchanges and promote the rights to freedom of expression, information and movement.

## **3. Separated Families and Abductions**

An estimated one million Koreans have been separated or forcibly removed from their families through displacement during the war, enforced disappearances and abductions, or following escape from the DPRK. The Japanese government has

also identified several Japanese citizens who were abducted by the North Korean government and has stated that this remains the most important question for Japan during the US-North Korea summit. Currently, there are over 30,000 North Koreans in South Korea, Japan, and other countries with no legal way to communicate with family members in North Korea.

We recommend that you urge the DPRK:

- Press North Korea to respect the right of every person to leave any country, including his/her own, and to return to her/his country, including by granting exit visas to all persons who hold or have held South Korean or other foreign nationality and their family members who wish to leave North Korea for South Korea or other countries.
- Urge the DPRK to engage constructively on the issue of abductions and to commit seriously to investigate and respond to the allegations made against it.

#### **4. Humanitarian Assistance**

According to the UN World Food Program (“WFP”), around 70 percent of the population in the DPRK are food insecure. This affects children, and pregnant and nursing women the hardest. One in three children under five years of age, and almost half of the children between 12 and 23 months, were anemic. In October 2017, WFP said it needed US\$25.5 million for the following six months to aid North Korean women and children.

Humanitarian aid is an international responsibility and is necessary to protect human life and rights. At the same time, oversight is crucial to ensure that aid goes to those who need



it most and is not diverted to the DPRK military or others, regardless of whether it is provided directly by the United States, the United Nations, or through private institutions.

We recommend that you

- Provide necessary humanitarian aid and urge the DPRK government to accept international or domestic humanitarian aid, with proper monitoring consistent with international standards of transparency and accountability. These standards include access throughout the country to determine needs and the ability to visit places where food and other aid is delivered.

Thank you for your consideration and we would be happy to discuss these issues further with you or your staff. If you would like to arrange a meeting please contact Francisco Bencosme, Amnesty International's Asia Advocacy Manager at [FBencosme@aiusa.org](mailto:FBencosme@aiusa.org).

Sincerely,

Amnesty International USA  
ALTSEAN-Burma  
Committee for Human Rights in North Korea  
Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l (Brussels)  
Korea Future Initiative  
Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice  
Liberty in North Korea  
Midwest Alliance for North Korean Refugees  
One Free Korea

People for Successful COrean Reunification  
The Center for Victims of Torture  
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List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various faiths in 20 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>

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## **ROMANIA: UK to grant controversial extradition to Romania**

By Lea Perekrests

HRWF (24.04.2018) 38-year old, London resident, Alexander Adamescu, [may face extradition](#) to Romania in the coming weeks despite a series of corrupt trials and the death of his father

in Romanian prison.

Alexander Adamescu's name first became of interest to Romania's National Anti-corruption Directorate (DNA) in June 2016 following the imprisonment of his father, Dan Adamescu on charges of bribery and corruption.

The charges against Alexander Adamescu arose shortly after the state was slapped with a GBP 200 million arbitration claim for the purposeful destruction of a group of companies controlled by Dan Adamescu.

From the initial charges against Alexander Adamescu, the [hearings and investigations have been riddled with corruption.](#)

For example, in one hearing, Alexander Adamescu was summoned only at the door of the court, thirty minutes prior to the hearing. Within thirty minutes after the trial, the judge had apparently read 37 arch level files of prosecution materials, had deliberated on the arguments of both sides, taken a decision, admitted an arrest warrant, and had submitted his decision on the court electronic system.

Unfortunately, such circumstances are not rare in Romania; concerns regarding fair trials and prison conditions are constants across the country. According to EAW laws, extraditions should not be conducted when human rights abuses are disputable in the receiving country.

## ***Human Rights in Romania – Abysmal prisons and court-room corruption***

The increasingly interconnectedness of the National Anti-corruption Directorate (DNA), the national intelligence service (SRI), and judges, magistrates, and other judicial authorities across the country are of high concern.

The wide use of phone-tapping, corruption, influence of judges, and faking evidence have all come to light as common practice within these institutions, which in turn are clear violations of human rights.

These issues are well-known, as the debate in Romania is highly public. The Chief Prosecutor of the DNA is currently being investigated for corruption, and the Secretary General of the SRI is facing calls to resign after the media exposed that he had been contacting judges via Facebook about ongoing trials.

In such a context, is it implausible to assume that those who face charges in Romania will receive a fair trial.

Furthermore, Romania's record of extended and unjustified pre-trial detention, paired with [overcrowded prisons and facilities which do not meet international standards](#), contributes to concern.

In 2017, Romania remained a prolific human rights abuser with

the most cases brought before the ECtHR of any EU country, and of the 47 nations of the Council of Europe – Romania fell just behind Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

The majority of these cases involved the prohibition of torture or inhuman treatment, a lack of effective investigation, and the right to a fair trial.

As of 1 January 2018, Romania even surpassed Russia and Turkey in the number of pending applications allocated to the judicial formation.

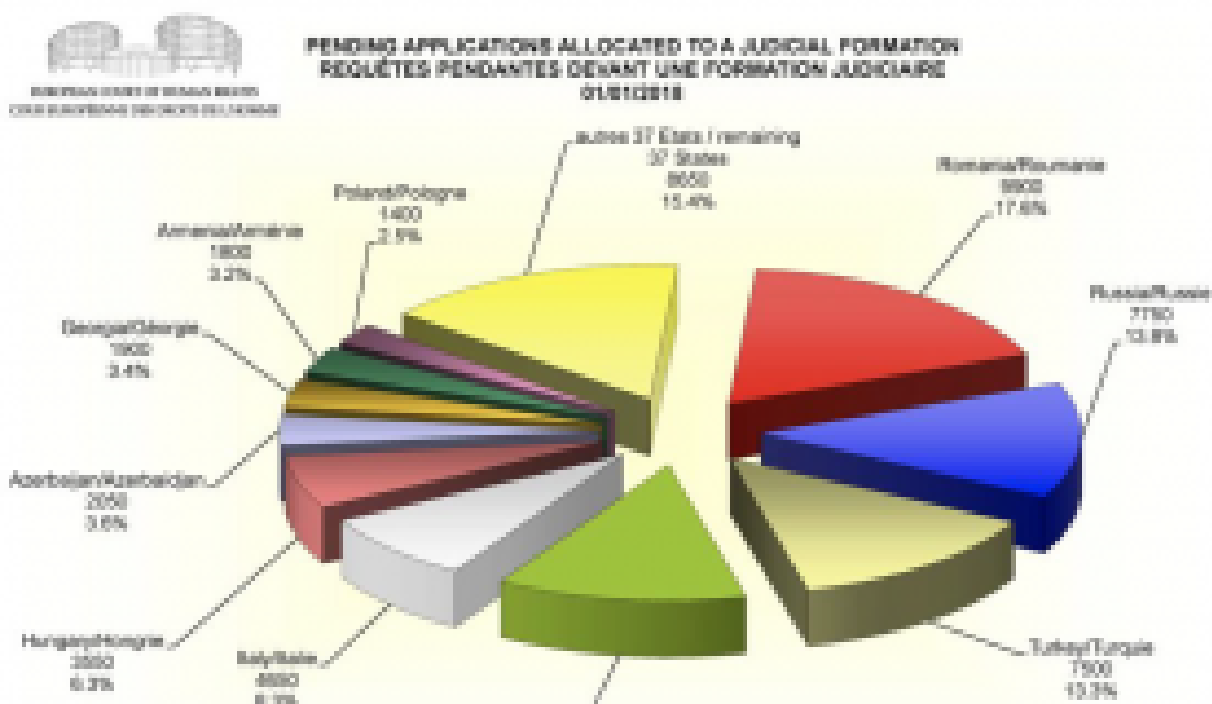


Image source: 'Violations by Article and by State 2017'. European Court of Human Rights. 2018.

[http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Stats\\_violation\\_2017\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Stats_violation_2017_ENG.pdf)

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Given this record, the UK courts would be at contention with EAW laws.

Even more worrying is that if Alexander Adamescu is extradited, he will face grave human rights violations during subsequent trials, and while in prison.

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# **NORTH KOREA: Over 1,000 North Korean workers slated for dispatch to China**

By Ha Yoon Ah

Daily NK (12.04.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2FaR3MK> – Over 1,000 North Korean laborers are preparing to be dispatched to work assignments in Dandong, China, a source in the area informed Daily NK on Wednesday. This follows sightings earlier this month of over 400 North Korean workers in the Chinese city of Helong to the east, together suggesting the two countries may be cooperating to restart joint business ventures in China.

“There are already about 100 North Koreans working at one clothing factory in Dandong, and they are expecting 1,000 more after a recent conversation with a manager from the North Korean side,” the source said on April 11.

The Chinese manager in the deal told the source that it is a popular opportunity among North Korean factory workers as they see it as a good chance to improve their skills, despite their expectations of low pay and long hours. “People around here are anticipating an influx of more North Korean workers in the near future,” the source remarked.

A separate source in China confirmed the development, saying, “It is true that over a thousand North Korean workers are preparing for the assignment. The Chinese brokers who have

engineered the deal for the jobs are working overtime right now.”

He added that the workers are still receiving permits from North Korean authorities to cross into China, as per standard guidelines, though these permits only technically allow up to 30 days’ stay abroad.

“[The Chinese companies] are trying to recruit more North Korean workers now as they feel sanctions may possibly be lifted and that the dangers have subsided. But they will just send them back in case they are not [lifted],” he said.

Following these developments, some are speculating that Kim Jong Un may have come to an agreement with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the matter during their meeting in Beijing last month.

Recent friction between China and the US over a brewing trade war may also be contributing to a sense of optimism among those affected in the region.

“We (Chinese people) are also hurting from sanctions, and now it seems like we are in a trade war with the US,” an additional source in China said.

“Knowing this, it is possible that authorities, despite sanctions, are turning a blind eye to the arrival of the North Korean workers.”



\*Translated by Colin Zwirko

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