

Terms of Reference

Consultancy (80%) within the framework of the project “Human Rights Defenders: Foreign Agents or Agents for Democracy?”

Background

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, human rights defenders (HRDs) defending democratic values currently face significant challenges. The Russian influence in the region, in particular the proliferation of Russian repressive legislation, hinders the development of democracy, including in countries that, until recently, were considered as “islands of freedom”. In this repressive environment, characterized by “foreign agents” laws, anti-LGBTI+ legislation, and draconian “anti-terrorist” and “anti-extremist” laws, human rights defenders are being continuously intimidated, stigmatized and criminalized as “enemies” and “traitors”, with women and LGBTI+ rights defenders facing particular threats. Beyond this, the human rights defenders community grapples with a range of internal challenges, including burnout, psycho-social or financial problems, a lack of young talent and fragmentation, leading to a limited capacity to effectively advocate for human rights at the national and international levels.

To counter these challenges, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) launches a **two-years project** titled “**Human Rights Defenders: Foreign Agents or Agents for Democracy?**”, aiming at empowering and uniting human rights defenders in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and amplifying their voices on the national and international levels to ensure respect for fundamental human rights. In order to achieve these changes, the project is organised around four key components: peer-to-peer experience-sharing and strategic reflections and how to use the existing mechanisms for the protection of human rights; capacity-building on advocacy; awareness-raising on the national, regional and international levels; and the direct financial support of local HRDs and human rights organizations in the region.

To lead and manage this program, FIDH is looking to engage a Consultant within its Eastern Europe and Central Asia Desk.

Framework

Within the framework of the project “**Human Rights Defenders: Foreign Agents or Agents for Democracy?**”, FIDH has engaged to:

1. Conduct a study of the repressive legislation in the region;
2. Organize at least eight experience-sharing and capacity-building workshops for human rights defenders from Eastern Europe and Central Asia, with a particular focus on Georgia and Kyrgyzstan;
3. Conduct at least five joint advocacy missions and events to further amplify the voices of human rights defenders before national, regional and international institutions;
4. Implement an awareness-raising campaign pointing out the detrimental effects of the “foreign agents” legislation, and supporting human rights defenders (including through statements, urgent appeals and other communications material);
5. Support its members and partners through emergency grants.

These activities will be facilitated by a Consultant.

Indicative consultancy timeline and outputs

Working in concert with FIDH's Eastern Europe and Central Asia Desk, FIDH's offices in Geneva and Brussels, FIDH's member organizations and partners in the region, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (FIDH-OMCT), and FIDH's Accounting and Finance Department, the consultant will:

1. Organize and coordinate advocacy missions, cross-regional events and workshops, including in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia, for human rights defenders from Eastern European and Central Asian States;
2. Co-administer the distribution of emergency grants to human rights defenders and human rights organizations;
3. Oversee the project budget;
4. Ensure, as a liaison, proper coordination and communication between the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Desk, member organizations, local and international partners, as well as FIDH's Finance and Communications Departments;
5. Expand and maintain close networks of human rights defenders in the target countries;
6. Facilitate the production of outreach and communications materials, including statements and urgent appeals, and their dissemination on FIDH's and partners' social media platforms and websites;
7. Track the target indicators and provide narrative reporting to the project, where needed;
8. Perform other tasks, as required by the Eastern Europe/Central Asia Desk.

Deliverables:

- One strategic note, including a stakeholder mapping, an activity tracker, target goals, and a binding timeline for the duration of the project (to be delivered within two weeks after the starting date, and to be approved by the Eastern Europe and Central Asia Desk Director);
- Organization, coordination and full implementation of the activities, including draft concept notes (terms of reference), budgets and mission reports for all events and missions foreseen in the project;
- Draft statements/urgent appeals in support of HRDs for democracy;
- Two narrative reports, and any other other MEAL-related tasks, as required by the EECA Desk.

Profile and expertise required for this assignment

- At least 5 years of experience working with human rights defenders from Eastern Europe/Central Asia, especially from Georgia or Kyrgyzstan, and an excellent understanding of the legal, factual and financial challenges to their work created by the "foreign agents" and other repressive legislation;
- Proven knowledge of international human rights law, as demonstrated by relevant studies and experience;
- Proven experience in project coordination, especially event management; proficiency in financial planning and budget management; ability to coordinate projects in repressive environments, including a strong awareness for potential security risks to human rights defenders;

- Proven experience in the field of human rights work, communication, journalism or advocacy, enabling the candidate to efficiently draft and facilitate the dissemination of press releases, urgent appeals and other outreach materials.
- Fluency in English and Russian languages required. Fluency in Georgian, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Belarusian, Tajik, Uzbek or another local language is a strong asset.
- Excellent communication, interpersonal and intercultural skills, with the ability to build sustainable relationships and manage and maintain networks.
- Ability to work independently, prioritize, and proactively communicate.

Duration of consultancy

From 24 February 2025 to 31 December 2026 (22 months).

Financial compensation

Consultancy contract: **gross salary of 2,500 EUR per month** for a duration of 22 months, at 80%.