



Mr Martin Schulz  
President  
European Parliament  
Brussels

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- Human Rights Watch
- Save the Children
- International Partnership for Human Rights

**Full Members**

- Amnesty International
- ACT Alliance EU
- Agir ensemble pour les droits de l'homme
- Association européenne des droits de l'homme
- Association for the Prevention of Torture
- CBM
- Christian Solidarity Worldwide
- CIFCA
- Conference of European Churches
- Coalition for the International Criminal Court
- DEMAS
- Ensemble Contre la Peine de Mort
- EuroMed Rights
- European Partnership for Democracy
- European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
- Fair Trials
- FIACAT
- Front Line Defenders
- Human Rights House Foundation
- Human Rights Without Frontiers
- International Center for Transitional Justice
- International Commission of Jurists
- International Dalit Solidarity Network
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- International Harm Reduction Association
- International Lesbian and Gay Association - Europe
- International Rescue Committee Belgium
- International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims
- Justice & Peace Netherlands
- La Strada International
- Light for the World
- Minority Rights Group Intl
- Nonviolent Peaceforce
- Open Society European Policy Institute
- Partners for Democratic Change International
- Peace Brigade International
- Penal Reform International
- PICUM
- PLAN International
- Protection International
- Quaker Council for European Affairs
- Search for Common Ground
- Terre des Hommes international federation
- World Coalition against Death Penalty
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
- World Vision

Brussels, 12th February 2016

Dear President Schulz,

We write on behalf of the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), a network of 49 organisations engaged in human rights and democracy at the EU level, to welcome the decision to place the *debates and votes on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (Rule 135)* on Thursday morning during last week's Strasbourg plenary session. This allowed for a maximum number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to be present during the debates and votes and demonstrated the European Parliament's commitment to human rights and democracy.

Against a worldwide backdrop of human rights violations, impunity and backsliding on human rights and democracy, the European Parliament's leadership on human rights is needed more than ever. Urgency resolutions represent one of the best tools for the European Parliament to address human rights violations in third countries and provide much needed support for human rights defenders on the ground working to defend and promote human rights and democracy in their respective countries.

The HRDN and MEPs committed to human rights have long advocated for the securing of a reasonable timing for these debates. The concern was that the marginalisation of debates and votes on human rights urgencies on the plenary's agenda, which in turn allowed for poor attendance by MEPs, sends a negative message affecting the whole credibility of the European Parliament as a human rights champion.

We call on you to now make this timing a permanent one. This decision would represent a key element in "enabl[ing] the Parliament's activities on human rights and democracy to be more visible, coherent and consistent, and thus more influential on the world stage", as called for by our network in our 2012 manifesto to the European Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

Yours sincerely,  
Troika, on behalf of HRDN

Claire Ivers

Jacqueline Hale

Tinatin Tsertsvadze

CC:

<sup>1</sup> Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), European Parliament: A more Consistent and Coherent Approach on Human Rights and Democracy is Needed, January 2012, [cc:http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009\\_2014/documents/droi/dv/131\\_manifestotoep\\_/131\\_manifestotoep\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/droi/dv/131_manifestotoep_/131_manifestotoep_en.pdf)  
*The Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) is an informal grouping of NGOs operating at EU level in the broader areas of human rights, democracy and conflict prevention. Participation in the network is open to non-governmental organizations which engage at EU level in the promotion of human rights, democracy and conflict prevention in and outside the EU.*

*The vision of the HRDN is that human rights and democracy are placed at the heart of the EU's internal and external policy agenda. This vision should manifest itself in a EU that effectively protects human rights at home and is a force for positive change in the world. In pursuit of this vision, the network aims to influence EU and member state human rights policies and the programming of their funding instruments to promote democracy, human rights and sustainable peace.*

Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for Democracy and Human Rights, Mr. Alexander Graf Lambsdorff

Vice-President of the European Parliament, Ms. Ulrike Lunacek  
Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, Ms. Elena Valenciano