



Wilton Park

Provisional programme

Human Rights 2022

Monday 21 – Wednesday 23 February 2022 | WP2011

Introduction

Human rights are currently under attack and there are increasing attempts to weaken human rights language. Where do these alternative narratives and interpretations come from? Who is advocating for them and by what means? And how can this trend be countered? The 16th meeting in the Wilton Park annual series is an opportunity to take stock of these issues and to consider appropriate responses.

Context

Human rights are being challenged worldwide. Increasingly assertive and influential offensives to reposition international human rights law and its application are questioning the fundamental principles of universal human rights and, as such, present a threat to liberal democracies and their values.

There is a growing risk that state duties and responsibilities to protect individuals will be sidelined, with human rights increasingly being portrayed as subject to negotiation and compromise. The rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights claim universal application. However, with human rights being questioned and increasing indicators that the rights of individuals are under attack, there is an urgent need to focus on implementation at a local level.

In recent years the international community has witnessed an acceleration of polarised views, a rise in populist leaders and the emergence of extremist movements, as well as shifting commitments from some key powers. Furthermore, the rapid shift to online interaction necessitated by the Covid19 pandemic has impacted diplomatic and civil society engagement on human rights discourse. There are positive examples of increased reach and inclusivity but also serious concerns about the 'digital divide', reduced access for civil society actors, and the security and safety for human rights defenders online.

This [Wilton Park](#) roundtable will provide an off the record space for frank discussion of these developments and consideration of ways in which to respond. Drawing on the experience of expert contributors, the meeting aims to:

- highlight the strategies being deployed to undermine human rights and human rights mechanisms and discuss their impact
- identify ways in which states and non state actors can respond to these threats

In partnership with:



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

- strengthen links across a spectrum of policy-makers, influencers and frontline practitioners
- generate activity amongst expert networks to take forward emerging actions and proposal

In partnership with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

Monday 21 February

1300

Participants arrive and buffet lunch available

1500

Welcome and introduction

Julia Purcell

Programme Director, Wilton Park

Christine Löw

Deputy Head, Peace and Human Rights Division, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

1515-1645

1. The human rights landscape: current concerns and future vision

Introductory session to set the scene: what strategies are being used to weaken human rights on the multilateral stage and how do these impact on individuals and civil society? Looking to a future vision: in what ways can institutions and actors that advocate for the universality and non-negotiability of human rights respond to these shifts and narratives?

Nada Al Nashif

Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Agnès Callamard

Secretary General, Amnesty International

1645-1730

Photograph followed by tea/coffee

1730-1830

2. Human rights mechanisms under attack: identifying and countering trends

Break out discussion

What are the current trends illustrative of systematic attacks on human rights standards and how are they manifested in different fora (eg UN Human Rights Council and other multi-lateral and regional bodies)? What are the options to counter these behaviours?

1900

Reception followed by dinner

Tuesday 22 February

0800-0900

Breakfast

0915-1045

3. Strengthening links: from local to global

How to ensure that the experiences of individuals and groups subject to human rights violations at a local level are reflected in global and national decision-making? How to respond to divisive narratives, evidence the arguments and ensure that human rights discourse reflects reality 'on the ground'? What is the 'human rights language' that has most resonance with decision makers, opinion formers and the wider public?

Michael O'Flaherty

Director, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Elham Saudi

Director, Lawyers for Justice in Libya (LFJL)

1045-1115

Tea/coffee

1115-1245

4. Defending human rights: the impact of new technologies

How to respond to the emerging threats posed by new technologies, including increased surveillance and monitoring, internet shutdowns, online hate speech and interference in democratic processes? In what ways can these technologies be used to the good to promote human rights, evidence concerns and enable human rights defenders? How far has international law adapted in response?

Irene Khan

UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Geneva

Steve Crown

Vice President, Deputy General Counsel, Microsoft Corporation, Redmond

Lea Kaspar

Executive Director, Global Partners Digital

1300-1400

Lunch

1400-1500

Free time

1500-1630

5. Shifts in global dynamics: the potential of new actors and emerging alliances

What forms of co-operation are needed to counteract the challenges to human rights? How to re-invigorate commitment amongst states that previously championed human rights? How to leverage the power of new and emerging actors and strengthen and build alliances? (states, state coalitions, regional groupings, cities, corporates)

John Morrison

Chief Executive Officer, Institute of Human Rights and Business (IHRB)

1630-1700

Tea/coffee

1700-1830

6. Opportunities for action

Break out session

Building on previous sessions, groups to consider key opportunities, fresh perspectives, re-energising action amongst key actors, recommendations for action.

1900

Reception followed by dinner

Wednesday 23 February

0800-0900	Breakfast and checkout
0915-1000	7. Opportunities for action: recommendations from break out discussion
1000-1100	8. Re-invigorating human rights: looking ahead
1100-1130	Tea/coffee
1130-1140	9. Evaluation survey Completion of online survey
1140-1245	10. Conclusions and next steps
1300	Lunch
1400	Participants depart

This is a preview programme and as such may be subject to change.

This is an invitation only conference.

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