

■ Drawing attention, both in Germany and abroad, to threatened and detained human rights defenders in talks with political decision-makers and in letters of petition, urging that they be protected or released;

■ Paying tribute to the commitment of human rights defenders when abroad – where possible – by meeting them in person for a discussion, visiting them in prison, pressing for them to be given a fair trial, or observing court proceedings;

■ Looking into whether threatened fellow parliamentarians can be “adopted” and supported.

The information provided by the Committee Secretariat can also be used for forms of support within Germany. It offers a good basis for petitions and talks with political decision-makers from countries in which human rights are violated.

To ensure that the information and lists of names are kept up to date, it is important for Members who have held talks or travelled abroad to pass on their impressions to the Secretariat of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, notify it of the steps they have taken, and make recommendations as to what course of action should be taken in future.

Getting involved is worthwhile – because the campaign aims to protect the courage and perseverance of human rights defenders worldwide.

#### Points of contact and sources of information

##### Coordination:

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

##### The campaign is supported by:

■ The German delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union

■ The German delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

■ The German delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE

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■ Various human rights organisations, such as amnesty international: [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org), Human Rights Watch: [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

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Deutscher Bundestag

## „Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians“

– A campaign by the German Bundestag on behalf of persecuted parliamentarians and human rights defenders abroad



### **Human rights defenders and threatened parliamentarians need protection worldwide**

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.

In many countries, politicians are also among the human rights defenders who are at risk. They may be elected representatives, opposition politicians or mayors, and they are frequently active in very difficult political conditions. Exercising their right to freedom of expression is usually their sole offence. The criticism they voice often makes them a thorn in the side of state institutions in countries where the human rights situation is problematic, and of paramilitary groups. They are frequently slandered, threatened, removed from office, subjected to arbitrary arrest, sentenced for "subversive" activities, tortured or even murdered. Some people seen as undesirable "disappear" forever. Those responsible are seldom convicted.

This is why the members of the German Bundestag's Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid launched

the "Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians" campaign. The basic idea is that the Members of the German Bundestag, who can carry out their work in safety, should help fellow parliamentarians who are at risk in other countries and persecuted human rights defenders.

With its adoption of a cross-party motion on the protection of threatened human rights defenders in December 2003, the German Bundestag has undertaken to participate in the initiative established by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to protect parliamentarians worldwide. In this way, the Bundestag is fulfilling the voluntary commitment it has made in the IPU framework to contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights. The campaign represents a milestone in solidarity between German and foreign parliamentarians and human rights defenders, and a significant contribution to a credible human rights policy.

### **What can Members of the Bundestag do for their fellow parliamentarians abroad?**

Members of the Bundestag have a network of international contacts which they can use on behalf of fellow parliamentarians who are at risk. The "Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians" campaign is not conducted solely by the members of the Committee on Human Rights, who are in any case already actively involved on behalf of many victims of human rights abuses. On the contrary, all Members of the Bundestag – irrespective of their areas of expertise – are called on to participate.

The Secretariat of the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid provides Members with information about whether opposition politicians are under threat in a country with which the Members have contact or

intend to visit, and offers advice on how best to support them. In cooperation with the Federal Foreign Office, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and non-governmental organisations, the Secretariat compiles briefing notes with the names of threatened or persecuted parliamentarians and human rights defenders in a specific country. The Members use this information to decide how they can best help threatened colleagues without potentially exposing the person in question to additional danger. The motion on the protection of threatened human rights defenders proposes various options for action:

## Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians



The universal logo for human rights