

Final Resolutions and Statements

**As adopted by the 185th Executive Committee of
Liberal International**



18 November 2010

PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Proposed by: Folkpartiet (Sweden), Democratic Alliance (South Africa)

Recalling the 1997 Oxford Manifesto,

Recognizing that everyone has the right to freedom of belief, thought, conscience, opinion, expression, association, movement, and to own private property.

Endorsing that all people have the right to freedom against discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

Noting that the constitutions or laws of all states do not protect these rights, and even in countries where these rights are formally guaranteed by the constitution or legislation they are not necessarily respected in practice.

Calling upon governments and member parties to work to implement appropriate legislative or constitutional change in order to guarantee these fundamental rights where they are lacking.

Demanding that governments and member parties act to ensure that in countries where the aforementioned rights are guaranteed by law they are also respected and protected in practice.

EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND DECENTRALISATION OF POWER

Proposed by: Liberal Democrats (UK)

The Executive Committee of Liberal International meeting in Cape Town deplores the way that power has been shifted in many countries away from local communities and towards ever more centralised forms of government, public services and enterprise.

The Committee in particular regrets that these centralising trends in government have contributed to the frustration of community voluntary activity, the erosion of local economies and the weakening of local life and institutions more broadly. It is a fundamental Liberal principle that power should be spread as widely as possible.

The Executive Committee calls on Governments around the World to be ambitious and take opportunities to revitalize neighbourhoods, by:

1. Empowering local democracy - Since local people are the experts in their own neighbourhoods and their own needs, the role of existing local authorities needs to be strengthened, and bodies representing smaller communities, local civil society and the community voluntary sector need to be given much greater support.

2. Freeing up local administration - Front line staff and public service professionals must be freed from detailed central control so that they can match services to local needs. The administration of health, the police and where appropriate the justice system must be made more responsive and accountable to the communities they serve, with administrative boundaries aligned to those of local authorities so as to promote effective coordination and integration of local services.

3. Encouraging local economics and enterprise - Localism depends also on a diverse local economy, less dependent on the direction and support of the centre, on the branches of national and multinational companies or on central finance. In the long run, successful local economies need a bedrock of local innovation, local enterprise, local energy, and a lending network capable of providing the necessary capital for local business, social enterprise and other endeavour.

4. Moving towards financial autonomy for local government – Central government control of local government finance has been the mechanism through which detailed central management of local government has been imposed. The Executive recommends a long-term target of achieving 75% of local government spending being raised locally, wherever possible, with provision for equalization.

The Executive calls for a transparent annual process of negotiation between representatives of local authorities and central governments on the allocation of central funding to local government, and for the governments to adopt as a priority the transfer of other revenue streams to local authority control.

RESOLUTION ON MEDIA FREEDOM

Proposed by: Radicali Italiani (Italy), D66 (the Netherlands), Democratic Alliance (South Africa) and Folkpartiet (Sweden)

Recalls the Oxford Manifesto: to promote media free from undue control or interference by government or dominant companies

Recalls the ELDR Congress 2009 (Barcelona) resolution: "Calls for the European Parliament as well as the European Commission to closely monitor the level of media freedom inside the EU as well as to encourage framework conditions for a pluralistic media landscape"

Recalls statements made at the ELDR Executive Council 2010 (Rome): Media should be as neutral as possible and present both sides of a discussion. In a liberal democracy investigative journalism is to be supported to make sure that accurate and reliable information is communicated.

South Africa

Raises concern about proposed legislation that could potentially place restrictions on press freedom in South Africa by limiting the public's right to access information, as well as the ability of investigative reporters to hold the government to account. The Protection of Information bill is currently before Parliament. Several provisions in the Protection of Information bill are cause for serious concern, including an overly broad definition of "national interest" with regards to classifying information and heavy penalties of up to 25 years in prison for the publication or dissemination of official or classified information. Additionally, those seeking to access or declassify information face several obstacles, including bearing the burden of proof that public interest outweighs national security concerns.

Notes that, combined with its proposal for a media appeals tribunal, which would punish reporters for "irresponsible and misleading reporting," the ANC's protection of information bill in its current form, would have profound effects on the amount of information that South Africans have about their government and would compromise the independence of South Africa's media.

Recognizing that South Africa, due to its influence, is of great importance to the entire southern African region. This also implies that South African media freedom is of great importance for all of southern Africa.

Calling upon governments and member parties to closely monitor the ongoing situation in South Africa relating to freedom of the press.

Calling upon governments and member parties to act forcefully in support of the protection of a vibrant, free and independent media in South Africa, in case the South African government takes any steps that could undermine media freedom.

Italy

Denounces the perpetration of a situation in which publicly owned and operated media outlets remain at the mercy of political parties or their factions, creating a

situation in which TV channels have become politburos in their own right. Such a context is, in patent contradiction of the mandate to provide a "public service", and allows the construction of news agendas around the wishes of those that nominate Editors and Directors of media outlets rather than providing a fair account of events.

Condemns the fact that all decisions in terms of re-allocation of air time as a redress for all those subjects excluded or silenced by the broadcast scheduling (be they religious groups, NGOs, political parties or "minorities") sanctioned by the independent Authority on Communications remain dead letter.

Expresses deep concerns about the lack of clear rules for the election of members of the above mentioned Authority and in particular on the recent election of a former Manager of both the public TV company RAI and Berlusconi's Mediaset, someone who in the last 10 years also served as a Member of Parliament and undersecretary in centre-right governments.

Deplores the fact that on the occasion of political elections rules and regulations of fair access to Media adopted by an ad hoc parliamentary committee are never implemented on time to provide the prescribed 45 of electoral campaigning

Highlights how Italy slipped back into the (Freedom House) Partly Free category with free speech limited by courts and libel laws, increased intimidation of journalists by organized crime and far-right groups, and concerns over the concentration of media ownership.

Notes that established democracies with traditionally open media are not immune to restricting media freedom.

Appeals to Liberals worldwide to speak up about limitations on media freedom and to carefully monitor the situation in their own country.

Reaffirms that censorship and limitations for individual journalists or newspapers, constitute a threat to press freedom. These threats can have no place in liberal democracy.

Appeals to Liberal leaders to discuss the media freedom situation with their colleagues from countries that have partly or non-free media and to urge them to turn back imposed penalties or proposed limitations on media freedom.

CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF SAKINEH MOHAMMADI ASHTIANI

Proposed by: International Network of Liberal Women (INLW) and International Federation of Liberal Youth (IFLRY)

Having regard to the resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly concerning a moratorium on executions pending the abolition of the death penalty;

Having regard to the report of the UN Secretary-General of 23 September 2009 on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the statement on Iran issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 4 March 2010;

Noting that Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani has been imprisoned since 2005 when she was tried pleading guilty under torture to the crime of having had two extramarital sexual relationships after the death of her husband;

Regretting Ashtiani was then sentenced to a punishment consisting on 99 lashes which was administered by the authorities;

Deploring that a few months later her case was brought up again when a separate court was prosecuting one of the two men involved in the death of Ashtiani's husband. She was illegally retried for the same alleged crime of adultery, convicted of adultery while still married, and sentenced to death by stoning under the Islamic Sharia law.

The Executive Committee of Liberal International

1/ Strongly condemns the sentencing to death by stoning of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani, and takes the view that, regardless of the facts, a sentence of death penalty can never be justified or accepted.

2/ Urges the Iranian authorities to release Ashtiani immediately.

3/ Reiterates its opposition to the death penalty and calls on the Iranian authorities, in accordance with UN GA Resolutions 62/149 and 63/138, to institute a moratorium on executions pending the abolition of the death penalty.

PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENTS



LI PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT REGARDING THE SITUATION IN THAILAND

The Liberal International Bureau is closely monitoring the situation in Thailand in the wake of the information received challenging the credentials of the Democrat Party of Thailand, as well as the Thai government. The Bureau has charged the Secretariat to provide further information based on direct meetings with all sides concerned, an analysis of the reports of the international Human Rights organizations, and opinions of NGOs and diplomatic missions in Thailand.

The Bureau expresses concern about allegations against its Thai full member party, the Democrat Party. At the same time, the Bureau expresses support to Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and the leadership of the Democrat Party in overcoming these challenges, and stands ready to assist our Thai colleagues in the implementation of the 5-point reconciliation plan, as well as the necessary democratization of the Thai legislative framework and in strengthening the Human Rights protection mechanism. We welcome the most recent statement of the Secretary General of Amnesty International Salil Shetty who expressed appreciation "...for the leading role played by the Kingdom [of Thailand] in promoting ASEAN's human rights agenda" and encourage the government to show further progress in this regard.

As President of Liberal International I will pay a visit to Thailand in the coming weeks for high-level meetings to assess the situation in the country. The Bureau will continue to closely monitor the developments in Thailand aiming at providing further information to the member parties.

DÉCLARATION DU PRÉSIDENT D'IL HANS VAN BAALEN MPE SUR LA CRISE POLITIQUE A MADAGASCAR

Pour la crise politique à Madagascar, l'Internationale Libérale reconnaît les efforts déployés par la Communauté Internationale par le biais de la SADC et de la Coordination Nationale des Organisations de la Société Civile (CNOSC) sous la direction du Chef de l'Equipe de Médiation, Monsieur Joaquim CHISSANO, ancien Président du Mozambique pour trouver une solution consensuelle et inclusive au retour dans les plus brefs délais à l'ordre constitutionnel.

Elle soutient l'application dans l'immédiat des accords politiques signés par les mouvances politiques et recommande une garantie d'une force exécutoire pour leur mise en oeuvre.

Elle condamne la démarche unilatérale entreprise par Monsieur Andry RAJOELINA dans l'organisation des consultations électorales qui ignorent les règles de base de la normalisation démocratique et des élections libres et transparentes.

Elle condamne également la limitation des libertés fondamentales des citoyens et les arrestations arbitraires des dirigeants politiques au mépris des droits de l'homme et de la démocratie.

Elle encourage la facilitation et la médiation de la CNOSC et de la SADC pour une sortie de crise consensuelle et inclusive.

STATEMENT OF THE LI PRESIDENT HANS VAN BAALEN MEP ON THE POLITICAL CRISIS IN MADAGASCAR

With regards to the political crisis in Madagascar, the Liberal International recognizes the efforts by the international community through the SADC and the National Coordination of Civil Society Organizations (CNOSC) under the lead of the Head of the Mediation Team, Mr. Joaquim Chissano, former President of Mozambique, to find a consensual and inclusive solution to return promptly to the constitutional order.

LI supports the immediate implementation of political agreements signed by the political movements and recommends a guarantee mechanism of a binding implementation.

LI condemns the unilateral approach taken by Mr. Andry RAJOELINA in the organization of elections that ignore the basic principles of democratic normalisation and free and fair elections.

Also, LI condemns the restriction of fundamental freedoms of citizens and the arbitrary arrests of political leaders in defiance of Human Rights and democracy.

LI encourages the facilitation and mediation of CNOSC and SADC for a consensual and inclusive resolution the crisis.