



# Code of conduct

Human Rights House Foundation and organisations in Human Rights Houses

## 1. Introduction

Human Rights House Foundation (HRHF) protects, empowers and supports human rights defenders and their organisations. To accomplish this, HRHF brings organisations together in Human Rights Houses and unites the Houses in an international network.

HRHF advocates with partner organisations to promote the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, and the right to be a human rights defender at home and abroad, utilising its consultative status at the United Nations and participatory status at the Council of Europe.

Today, independent human rights organisations work together in 16 Human Rights Houses in 11 countries. The Houses are located in Eastern & Western Europe, the Caucasus, and the Balkans.

HRHF is based in Oslo, with an office in Geneva and representation in Brussels and Tbilisi.

This Code of Conduct sets out the professional standards of the Human Rights House Foundations and organisations in Human Rights Houses (HRHs). It guides us in the performance of our professional responsibilities and the achievement of our common goal, which is to promote and strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Code of Conduct:

- Establishes a standard for the behaviour of all organisations and governing bodies in the Human Rights Houses and the Human Rights House Foundation.
- Lays out the duties of all organisations and governing bodies.
- Sets guidelines for communication, between the Human Rights House Foundation and the organisations in Human Rights Houses with external actors.
- Improves the effectiveness of our work by enhancing transparency and accountability.

## 2. Our values

Human Rights House Foundation and organisations in Human Rights Houses and their governing bodies affirm and promote the following values:

- We will participate in, contribute to and gain from the network of Human Rights Houses and the work of other Human Rights Houses, considering that cooperation is essential to our purpose.
- We will treat one another as equals, with mutual trust, respect, and solidarity.
- We will be open, transparent and reliable in our decisions and relationships.
- We will communicate with and about each other in a respectful, non-violent and nonaggressive manner.
- We affirm and believe that every human being has dignity and equal rights and we will respect all persons accordingly.

### **3. To whom the Code applies**

The Code governs the conduct of Human Rights House Foundation and organisations in the Human Rights Houses, including the governing bodies.

In addition, while the Code specifically applies to Human Rights House Foundation and the organisations in Human Rights Houses, we expect our partners, experts, advisors, and others who work with the network, to respect and comply with the Code and our values.

### **4. Principles of Conduct**

#### **1. The safety and protection of human rights defenders**

The safety of human rights defenders is an explicit consideration at all times. It is taken into account in all our decisions and activities.

#### **2. Respect for all human rights of all individuals without discrimination**

We respect all human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all persons in all countries of the world in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

#### **3. Transparency and accountability**

We are committed to being transparent and open about our objectives, structure and activities. We seek to be independent from our donors and do not tolerate corruption, internally or externally.

#### **4. Conflict of interest**

Leaders of Human Rights Houses and member organisations will not engage in political activities that restrict or damage the independence of the HRH or the HRHF.

#### **5. Equality and autonomy**

Each member organisation in a Human Rights House is an equal partner in the House and retains its autonomy; each Human Rights House is similarly an equal partner in the Network and retains its autonomy.

#### **6. Good faith**

We act honestly and in what we believe to be the best interest of human rights defenders, member and partner organisations, and the Network.

#### **7. Good governance**

When we take and implement decisions, we will observe the following standards of governance: we will be participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive.

#### **8. Abusive language**

We do not use and will not tolerate any abusive language in our work.