



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.



10 ACTIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are not abstract ideals. They are the laws that protect people from harm, the mechanisms that hold power to account, and the freedoms that make democracy meaningful.

Around the world, however, those rights are under pressure. Hard-won protections are being rolled back. The space for rights is narrowing – slowly, but unmistakably. And parliamentarians are being silenced.

Yet human rights are only as strong as the parliaments that defend them. That is why this campaign exists. *Bring human rights into focus* is a call to action for parliamentarians everywhere. Because rights don't defend themselves. They require people with the power to act being willing to use it. In parliament, that power is yours.

This booklet sets out 10 concrete actions across two pillars, all serving one mission. Some of those actions will take an afternoon. Others will take years of sustained commitment. All of them will make a difference.

The future of rights is written in parliaments. Start writing!

**BRING HUMAN
RIGHTS INTO
FOCUS**



PILLAR ONE

PROTECTING PARLIAMENTARIANS



When a parliamentarian is silenced, the people they represent lose their voice, too. These actions are about standing up – publicly or behind the scenes – for colleagues whose rights are under threat.



1

RAISE A CASE ON THE FLOOR OF PARLIAMENT

Use the tools at your disposal: a written or oral question, a debate, a hearing, a resolution or a committee report. Naming a case in parliament shines a light where silence would otherwise prevail. For victims, this can make all the difference.

2

SPEAK OUT IN THE MEDIA

Give an interview. Write an op-ed. Post on your verified social media account. Explicitly naming a case and calling for action sends a powerful signal – and makes it harder for that case to be ignored.

3

ACT THROUGH CONFIDENTIAL CHANNELS

Not all advocacy needs to be public to be effective. Raise cases through discreet parliamentary or diplomatic engagement: meetings, letters or quiet interventions. Sometimes the most powerful moves happen away from the spotlight.

PILLAR TWO

STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARY HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION



Rights depend not only on their recognition in law, but also on the relevant institutions to uphold them in practice. These actions are about using your role as a parliamentarian to embed human rights at the heart of everything your parliament does.



4

CHAMPION INCLUSIVE LEGISLATION

Introduce, amend or support laws to remove the barriers that exclude marginalized groups from parliament and public life, and take concrete action to ensure these groups' full and equal participation, without discrimination.

5

INVEST IN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Promote human rights education within parliament through training and awareness programmes, and push for those same values to take root in public institutions and society at large.

6

ENGAGE WITH UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

Get involved in drafting your country's reports to UN mechanisms, participate in the delegations that present them, and help turn the recommendations that follow into concrete action at home.

7

SCRUTINIZE LAWS FOR THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

Work with civil society to review the human rights implications of draft legislation or policy, and document what you find. Good lawmaking starts with asking the right questions and engaging in constructive debate – before a law is passed.

8

BUILD OR STRENGTHEN HUMAN RIGHTS STRUCTURES IN PARLIAMENT

Establish or reinforce a parliamentary committee, mandate or focal point dedicated to human rights. Structures matter: when rights have a home in parliament, they are harder to ignore.

9

ASSESS HOW YOUR PARLIAMENT PERFORMS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Lead or participate in a structured self-assessment of how your parliament addresses human rights – and commit to the follow-up actions it identifies. Keeping track of how you work will help you monitor your achievements.

10

ACT ON REPORTS FROM NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

Bring at least one report from your national human rights institution into parliament – through a debate, hearing or committee review – and follow up on what it reveals. These institutions exist to hold power to account. Parliament is where that accountability becomes real.

THE FUTURE OF RIGHTS IS WRITTEN IN PARLIAMENTS

Find out more at
ipu.org/humanrights



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