



## FAQS



### **What is the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR)?**

The International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) is a registered non-profit organization with the German Court Frankfurt/Main with the signature 73 VR 6627. The ISHR supports people who fight for the implementation of human rights in their countries through non-violent means, and/or people who are persecuted for demanding their rights. The ISHR places high importance on the following human rights: the right to life and personal safety, civil rights including freedom of expression, assembly, religion and press, and the right to freedom of movement. The ISHR bases its work on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights from December 10, 1948, and on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The ISHR has Consultative Status (Roster) with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, Associated Status with the Department of Public Information (DPI) of the United Nations and Participative Status with the European Council.

### **When and by whom was the ISHR founded?**

The International Society for Human Rights was founded by 13 members as the “Society for Human Rights” on April 8, 1972 in Frankfurt/Main. During that time, many demonstrated against the war in Vietnam; however, no one demonstrated for the thousands of political prisoners in Soviet penal camps, or against the firing order and the victims at the Berlin Wall, or for the politically persecuted and imprisoned in Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and other Eastern European states. The founding of the ISHR was initiated by Iwan I.



Agrusow, born in the Russian town of Pskow near the border to Estonia. During World War II, he was brought to Germany as a forced labourer at the age of 20. At the end of WWII, Mr. Agrusov knew that Soviet authorities treated forced labourers who wanted to return to their home country as traitors; thus, he decided to stay in Germany. A further six people who had also personally experienced human rights violations during this period were among the founding members.

### **How is the ISHR organised?**

The International Society for Human Rights (ISHR) is represented by sections and national groups worldwide, which are organised as associations in their countries. All together the 38 national sections, national groups, and working groups total approximately 35,000 members. The sections and national groups send representatives to the International Council of the ISHR. The International Secretariat and headquarters of the ISHR are based in Frankfurt/Main, Germany. The headquarters in Frankfurt/M as well as offices in some other countries have full time employees, and all other members work voluntarily. Members of a national section are organised into working groups (based in specific cities) or into committees (thematic issues).

### **In which geographical and thematic areas does the ISHR work?**

The work of the ISHR covers a wide range of topics. Among the areas of focus include freedom of expression, association, religion and press; however, topics also range from eliminating barbaric punishments such as stoning, amputation, blinding and flogging, to upholding women's rights. Working on the establishment of civil society in Eastern Europe is also an ongoing overall project of the ISHR.

ISHR sections focus on self-selected topics. Among these include - depending on the section - classical human rights work through PR-, press and individual cases, but also humanitarian work. The latter may include projects such as soup kitchens for children living on the street, and aid for abandoned children, disabled individuals, former political prisoners, and/or family members of political prisoners. Further examples include legal consultation, support for orphanages, re-integration assistance, and improvement of conditions of detention, as well as Union rights, among others.

### **How is the ISHR financed?**

The ISHR is recognised by the German government as a non-profit NGO. It is primarily



financed through donations and membership-fees. A smaller portion comes from fines that were imposed by the German Local Courts. The ISHR does not receive subsidies from state or communal authorities, but seeks grants from international institutions like the European Union and international foundations.

### **Does human rights work really have an impact?**

The ISHR has many success stories, such as Amina Lawal, a Nigerian woman who was accused of adultery. Her sentence was to be stoned to death in 2002, but public interest and pressure saved her life. The ISHR contributed to this success by gathering over 300,000 signatures.

Experience has shown that human rights work can have an impact! Regimes which violate human rights have an interest in not being exposed to the international community for disrespecting international treaties and agreements. Additionally, some trade agreements are based on conditionality, meaning that these agreements include a human rights clause. From a global perspective, the differences achieved through human rights work may seem small, but for the people concerned it may mean the end of torture, gaining their liberty or even saving their lives. Many small steps and successes can lead to medium- or long- term perspective changes in a country.

### **What can I do to help?**

There are many possibilities in which each and every person can participate in promoting human rights. We are confident that there is also a way for you to help. You can find some suggestions here:

- What can you do? ...
- Donations ...
- Intership or voluntary work at the ISHR ...

### **How can I become a member?**

Members are not only the soul of a society – they are the society. They give impulses and contribute to fulfilling the association’s goals. They give the association importance when dealing with governments, politicians, authorities and international organisations. They can elect the board of directors or take the responsibility to be a candidate themselves.



Everyone who is interested in human rights is therefore very welcome to send a membership application to one of the ISHR's section. He or she must be at least 16 years old, hold up the values of liberty and democracy and should not belong to an extremist organisation.

- Addresses ...
- Institutional membership

### **Can I do an internship at ISHR?**

Are you interested in an internship at ISHR? We would be glad about your contribution to our work, e.g. in the area of press- or PR-related work. Please write us or send an email to: [info@igfm.de](mailto:info@igfm.de). Only through voluntary work of interns and volunteers can the wide range of ISHR's work be accomplished ... thank you very much!

### **How do regimes violating human rights react to the accusations of human rights organisation?**

Human rights organisations speak about unpleasant truths. They are observed with suspicion by some states, some even try to make them sound untrustworthy, others try to totally shut them up. The People's Republic of China and Cuba for example, tried to hinder the ISHR-application for the Consultative Status with the United Nations' ECOSOC, by claiming that ISHR information about political prisoners in China and Cuba was not true.

### **Is it correct, that the ISHR was accused if being a public enemy by the former German Democratic Republic?**

During the Cold War many citizens of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) exercised their right to freedom of expression, opinion and movement. They were persecuted and imprisoned. ISHR members in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) spoke up for these political prisoners.

Already in 1975 the GDR-Minister for State Security (Stasi), General Erich Mielke, declared the ISHR as public enemy and started a defamation campaign against ISHR. Nowadays over 100 files at the agency "Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Archives" (known as Gauck authority) are proofs of this campaign. They testify that many Stasi-helpers in West Germany have done this destructive, demoralising work for money or because of political-ideological conviction. Today some false declarations made by the Stasi are still around and



circulated in the internet with the claim to be true.

### **How can I remain updated?**

It will be a pleasure for us to regularly send you information via e-mail. You can find further information under “publications”.

- News ...
- Publications ...