



DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN (DRHR)

Mobilizing Legislators as Defenders of Democracy

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"DEMOCRACY IS A PROGRESSIVE SYSTEM IN WHICH THE RIGHTS OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL, REGARDLESS OF THEIR GENDER, RACE, ETHNICITY, OR RELIGION, MATTERS."

Hon. Rozaina Adam, MP (The Maldives), PGA Board Member and Chair of the Parliamentary Rapid Response Team (PARRT).

GOAL

Increasing consensus holds that democracy is in decline globally. Elements of backsliding include progressive erosion of democratic principles, such as the separation of powers, checks and balances, independence of the judiciary and equality before the law; rising perpetuation of disinformation; incremental dismantling of protections for press freedoms and weaponization of the media; and repression of vulnerable populations and minorities, including opposition members, journalists, human rights defenders and legal professionals.

Assaults on democracy and civic spaces have often entailed attacks on the physical integrity and psychological well-being of MPs. PGA's global network, comprised of over 1,200 Members of Parliament in 145 countries worldwide, recognizes the latent threat and stands ready to take action through PGA's core **Campaign for Democratic Renewal and Human Rights**, launched in 2018.

2022 has been the 16th consecutive year of deteriorating freedoms and rights around the globe. Authoritarian regimes have consolidated, sought new forms to co-opt and undermine democratic institutions and principles, and grab power to distort national politics, increase hate, spread disinformation and misinformation campaigns, and dismantle the international order.

As representatives of the democratic branch closest to citizens, legislators have the mandate and responsibility to stand against these dangerous trends, shape national agendas, resist executive incursions, and work with civil society to preserve civic and political spaces. Unfortunately, under these circumstances, parliamentarians themselves - who often act as human rights defenders - are increasingly at risk, especially in contexts of democratic backsliding.



PILLARS



Pillar I: The Parliamentary Rapid Response Team (PARRT)

In the face of the scale, complexity, and ever-evolving nature of the threats against them, MPs must now act to support democracy and one another. PGA assembled on 22 March 2020, the Parliamentary Rapid Response Team (PARRT), a cohort of 8 committed MPs from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas who act as “first responders” intervening in cases where parliamentarians and human rights defenders are at risk.



Pillar II: The Global Parliamentary Code of Democratic Conduct

Recent years have seen a progressive deterioration in the integrity of political discourse, including a decline in the trustworthiness of information and a rise of “dangerous speech” that can increase the risk of violence. On 19 March 2021, at the margins of its International Council Meeting, PGA launched the Global Parliamentary Code of Democratic Conduct as a mechanism to hold parliamentarians accountable for their speech, commit themselves to demand dialogue respectful of all and refrain from disinformation.



Pillar III: The Parliamentary Toolbox for Democracy Defense

Threats to democracy are not new, but contemporary challenges are more nuanced and complex than in previous backsliding phases. To empower MPs in this fight and as we enter into a new era, PGA has been compiling existing resources and carrying out preliminary work to draft a toolbox that will enable parliamentarians to detect and combat early warning signs of democratic decline and propose pro-rights alternatives.

Check our calendar on PGA's website to stay up to date with our upcoming activities in 2023

“YOUR SOLIDARITY BOLSTERS MY CONVICTION TO ASSIDUOUSLY DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE DESPITE UNRELENTING POLITICAL PERSECUTION ATTEMPTS TO CURTAIL MY MANDATE.”

PGA member and incarcerated Senator Leila de Lima (The Philippines).



ACTIVITIES IN 2022

+ PARRT members have continued their relentless work to advocate for the **protection of women parliamentarians worldwide** and expressed their concern for the **democratic decline in Sri Lanka**.

+ Over the past 2022, the DRHR Campaign focused on global threats to democracy, including the *coup d'État* in **Burkina Faso** and the failed *coup d'État* in **Guinea Bissau**, disinformation and misinformation campaigns during the **Philippines** elections, and serious human rights violations during protests in **Ecuador** and **Iran**.

+ From 7-8 April 2022, PGA participated in the **International Workshop of Scholars and Parliamentarians on the Role of Parliaments and Representative Entities in the face of the challenges of the 21st Century**.

+ On 29 April 2022, PGA co-hosted with the Platform for Peace and Humanity and the Sentinel Project a virtual session on **“AI and the spread of hate speech & propaganda: Challenges and possibilities in the use of AI and its legislative regulation.”**

+ On 10 May 2022, PGA addressed a **Codes of Conduct, Transparency, and Integrity** session during a Seminar for Parliamentarians of the 12th Parliament of Guyana.

+ On 18 June, PGA Commemorated the **International Day for Countering Hate Speech**.

+ On the occasion of the **International Day of Parliamentarism 2022**, PGA participated in the conference organized by the European Parliament Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG), dedicated to **“Solidarity with Parliamentarians: Defending the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.”**

+ On 24 August, to support other Campaigns' efforts, PGA participated in an event to **support Afghanistan citizens and human rights defenders and address the current humanitarian challenges**.

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