

Another Chance for “Helsinki from Below”? Reviving OSCE-Related Human Rights Groups

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Abstract

The OSCE faces a rift in understanding among participating States concerning its role, with the human dimension emerging as a main victim of this crisis. During the Cold War, the Helsinki movement put human rights at the centre of the Helsinki process. Its actions influenced international politics and gave relevance to human rights principles. Yet the movement subsided at the beginning of the twenty-first century, unable to respond effectively to the authoritarian backlash, suffering from the “NGO-ization” of human rights activism, and turning its focus towards the EU and the Council of Europe. Despite these developments, there have been examples of creative and mission-driven transnational cooperation within the OSCE area. Drawing on these examples, this paper argues that the OSCE can become more relevant if a renewed Helsinki movement takes centre stage.

Keywords

OSCE, Helsinki movement, human rights, human rights defenders, citizen mobilization

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Introduction

The Helsinki movement began as disparate monitoring efforts by citizen groups but soon developed into a transnational advocacy network that gave relevance to human rights (HR) principles. Although many Helsinki committees continue their work, the united movement didn't survive into the twenty-

first century. Another Helsinki-inspired wave came in the 1990s with the peace-oriented Helsinki Citizens' Assembly movement, which also made an impact but failed to sustain itself. The global trend of “NGO-ization” shifted the focus to professional litigation and advocacy, and the authoritarian trends and restrictive policies of governments pushed most HR groups into a defensive mode.

Among human rights defenders (HRDs) there is little sense of a joint movement seeking to bypass divisions across Europe. Also lacking is a common

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language as priorities diverge, project thinking dominates, and solidarity is more symbolic than effective. Many HR groups, especially from the post-Soviet space, have expressed frustration over the narrow scope of solidarity actions. These actions are often limited to statements expressing concern and detailed reports documenting HR abuses, which remain mostly unread due to their length and the jargon they use. While OSCE-hosted forums such as the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting offer access to civil society, the potential impact of HR groups has been impeded by modes of thinking and functioning that centre on particular problems rather than creating parallel and alternative solutions. Drawing on the history of the Helsinki movement and recent examples of transnational activism, this paper argues for a shift towards greater cooperation and assistance across borders. OSCE-related HR groups should develop a common language and agenda based on internal demands for justice and equity in societies throughout the OSCE space and should encourage a transnational community of supporters.

The paper first presents the historical roots of the Helsinki movement and changes following the collapse of the Soviet Union. It continues with a critical examination of the role of HR groups working alongside OSCE institutions. It then reflects on examples of transnational cooperation, including joint responses to crises and common efforts to rebuild the movement. The paper closes by proposing steps for strengthening and supporting such cooperation.

The birth and transformation of a movement

In his 1975 Nobel lecture, physicist and HR activist Andrei Sakharov proclaimed that peace, progress, and HR are inextricably linked, such that it is impossible to achieve one if the other two are neglected.¹ International security, he proclaimed, is inconceivable without an open society with freedom of information, freedom of conscience, the right to publish, and the right to travel.

On 12 May 1976, at a press conference at Sakharov's apartment, the establishment of the Moscow Group of Assistance in Implementation of Helsinki Accords, soon to be known as the Moscow Helsinki Group (MHG), was announced. Led by Yuri Orlov, who brought forward the idea of public monitoring of compliance with the Helsinki Act, the MHG would go on to spark an international movement.² The founders of the movement ended up in prison or in exile, but Helsinki groups and committees were formed in other countries – first in former Soviet republics and then in Western states. The US Helsinki Watch group, founded with the participation of Lyudmila Alexeyeva, an exiled member of the original MHG, would later become Human Rights Watch.

An attempt to bridge the divisions in Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall led to another wave of the Helsinki movement called the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (HCA). The HCA was a forum where civil society groups from both East and West could exchange experiences, discuss common concerns, and formu-

late joint strategies.³ The driving force behind the movement was solidarity among intellectuals from East and West who sought to assist civil society initiatives in difficult spaces. The movement saw the formation of groups in countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Moldova, and the Yugoslav successor states, some of which would become areas of frozen or open conflict. The HCA mainly worked on peace issues and people-to-people diplomacy, but some groups took up HR advocacy, becoming vocal participants in national HR communities in countries such as Armenia and Turkey. However, the movement subsided at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

As states from the former socialist block increasingly joined other European organizations, most HR groups shifted their attention to either the EU or the Council of Europe. The EU leveraged great financial and political power, and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) soon became one of the most effective international judicial mechanisms for addressing HR violations. Engagement with these organizations was the preferred option as it seemed more likely to lead to long-lasting democratic change. As a result, many Helsinki committees departed in their own directions, providing expertise at the national level, focusing on litigation (primarily at the ECtHR), or working towards reform that would bring countries closer to EU membership. Others focused on conflict resolution and reconciliation in the Balkans and in the post-Soviet space.

Although most kept the HCA name, many groups lost contact with other

committees. Some met periodically, but common campaigns became rare. In the late 1990s, the International Helsinki Federation, established in 1982 in solidarity with Soviet dissidents, found itself competing for funds with local groups and focusing much more on its own organizational support than on its mission.⁴ Its Vienna-based secretariat filed for bankruptcy in 2008 following a scandal involving the misappropriation of funds by its financial manager.⁵

An effort to revive cooperation led to the launch of the Civic Solidarity Platform in 2010. The Platform has 100 member organizations and serves the important functions of coordinating different groups (including through joint monitoring and solidarity missions), encouraging the formulation of statements on emerging issues, and general coordination with international bodies. Despite its initial promise, however, it has fallen victim to the same shortcomings as other large international NGOs – dependence on bilateral funding, Western domination, ineffective decision-making structures, and expertise-driven legitimacy as opposed to constituency legitimacy. The participation of most groups has been limited to attending the annual meeting and signing public statements.

The international reaction to HR crises has lacked impact, mostly limiting itself to symbolic gestures and the voicing of concern. There is therefore a need to reform and strengthen HR movements so as to overcome the dangers of authoritarianism, nationalism, and isolationism. As Lyudmila Alexeyeva urged the MHG

partners at the annual HR conference just prior to her death in 2018:

We must appeal to people's values, historical experience, and common sense. This is very difficult but essential, and if we are convincing, consistent, and firm, success will be on our side without fail. [...] When we began our difficult journey for the defense of human rights, we had far fewer grounds for optimism than we do today, but we believed in the success of our hopeless cause!⁶

Learning from successful citizen mobilization

There have been efforts by HR groups to search for alternative, experience-based solutions to HR challenges that involve forming a common language and agenda, building a community of support for HR ideas, and proposing actions for a wider public. Human rights work mainly remains limited to reporting on problems and appealing to courts and international bodies. It is also heavily project-driven and reactive. Nonetheless, there have been initiatives that represent successful educational programmes and citizen-driven mobilizations; such initiatives point to ways in which HR work can be strengthened.

One such example is the International School of Human Rights, first launched by Marek Novicki of the Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights in 1990. The educational programmes run by the Foundation greatly contributed to form-

ing the new language of HR in the Russian-speaking post-Soviet space.⁷ The students of the Higher Course on Human Rights in Warsaw became active across a number of organizations, with some becoming successful HR trainers in their own right. Similarly, the International School for Human Rights and Civic Actions (active from 2008 to 2020), launched by the international Youth Human Rights Movement with the support of the MHG, went on to train a new generation of young HRDs, many of whom became leaders of HR groups in at least nine different countries. These educational initiatives have helped to promote a common language of HR theory and practice, serving as spaces for exchanging experiences, testing new ideas, building networks, and strengthening solidarity.

Another example of a successful experience-driven movement comes from Belarus. When post-electoral protests in Belarus resulted in violence in December 2010, Russian and Ukrainian HRDs, many of whom shared common experiences at the above-mentioned HR schools, launched the International Observation Mission (IOM) under the auspices of the Committee of International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus (CIC).⁸ The IOM was present in Minsk and both monitored and sought to ensure compliance with OSCE commitments. It focused on defending prosecuted journalists, lawyers, and HRDs, was present at searches and court trials, was in constant contact with local groups, and informed the relevant OSCE and UN bodies. The CIC worked for several months with no external fund-

ing. It nevertheless managed to attract forty-three NGOs, engage more than seventy-five different people in the work of its bodies, and influence major decisions on Belarus at the time, including the OSCE Moscow Mechanism and a number of UN and Council of Europe resolutions. On a symbolic level, it also drew additional attention to HR in Belarus in countries such as Russia and Ukraine. It spread the idea of international solidarity and created a model for civil society reactions to crackdowns based on evidence on the ground, drawing from regional experience while remaining internationally connected.⁹ Finally, the Committee created the post of a Special Rapporteur and engaged Neil Jarman, Chair of the OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Panel of Experts on Freedom of Assembly, to investigate the events of 19 December 2010.¹⁰ The Special Rapporteur examined the events in the streets of Minsk, which the government had claimed were mass riots, and subsequently posed questions to the authorities. The report, drawing on these questions and other publicly available data, preceded the official OSCE Moscow Mechanism report, which partly drew on the Special Rapporteur’s conclusions and indicated gross and systematic HR violations.¹¹ Most importantly, the CIC and the IOM provided examples of engagement and solidarity among HRDs across borders and of support for HRDs on the ground, serving as a guide for action towards accountability during mass HR abuses.

Another model of citizen-driven mobilization comes from independent observ-

er initiatives in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. These initiatives mainly focus on court monitoring (for instance by attending trials to monitor the accessibility and openness of courts to the public), citizen oversight of law enforcement (by routinely inspecting police stations and the work of police patrols), and monitoring mass rallies. They have formed an international movement of independent watchdogs and sometimes engage in mediation and crisis prevention. These initiatives base their actions on the HR commitments compiled in the OSCE ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and on methods from the OSCE ODIHR Assembly Monitoring Handbook and Trial Monitoring Manuals, promoting these HR commitments and methods among volunteer observers belonging to the citizen oversight movement.¹²

Citizen mobilization supplements official monitoring performed by ODIHR, which is only open to its staff and to a pool of selected international experts, requires significant resources, and depends on governments agreeing to admit observers, thus making their presence practically impossible in some countries. Civil society groups are able to cover major mass protests and key court proceedings in places to which official OSCE monitors may not have access and in numbers that ODIHR cannot match. They also work primarily with domestic audiences, presenting their own societies with factual reporting and comparisons with the international standards their countries have accepted. Most importantly, they serve as

mobilization points for broader citizen participation.

Strengthening human rights movements

One of the key purposes of HR groups is to hold regimes that commit grave HR violations accountable. To achieve this goal, HR groups need to solve key social problems and create citizen HR movements. To that end, HR groups need an enabling environment, ample supporters with an understanding of HR, economic sustainability, and financial independence.

There are certain groups that work at the forefront of HR defence. These include journalists, who inform society and shape public debate; lawyers, who must be able to defend the accused without being associated with the presumed crimes of their clients and without fear of prosecution; and HRDs, who must be able to defend the rights of others and be acknowledged as performing a key function in bringing justice to victims and upholding internationally agreed HR obligations. It is no coincidence that these groups are targeted when there are contested elections or mass unrest.

One can argue that an attack on a representative of any of these groups is not an internal matter or a minor violation but a threat to the international system of HR protection. Yet there is no publicly available list of representatives of such groups who have been imprisoned or persecuted for their professional activities; indeed, aside from proverbial statements

of concern, it seems that there have thus far been no coordinated efforts on behalf of international organizations to advocate for their release.¹³ ODIHR previously engaged in monitoring the situation with HRDs in particular but failed to expand its efforts beyond just a few participating States.¹⁴ OSCE documents are among the few to include additional guarantees on the freedom of movement of HRDs and journalists.¹⁵

What is largely missing is targeted and practically applicable education on HR and awareness raising that moves beyond the like-minded. Existing higher education programmes focused on HR do not usually include practical engagement in HR work. Higher education programmes rarely include engagement with active HRDs (for example through internships), leading to the distancing of academia from practitioners. This undermines research on HR issues in the most problematic countries. There is also a clear lack of education courses that draw on both the local and the international context, involve experts with field experience, and are available in Russian and other national languages of the OSCE participating States, whether online or offline. More practically oriented HR education could shed light on the situation on the ground and would increase public awareness of HR. Furthermore, promoting the values of HR and the role of HRDs is necessary for strengthening the work of HR groups. Marketing techniques employed in the commercial sector could easily be adapted to serve this purpose. Such communication has received increased attention, with some

examples from HR groups potentially serving as inspiration.¹⁶

Finally, the funding of HR work is often handicapped by the dominance of project-based approaches, dependence on the priorities of donor countries or foundations, and a lack of long-term investment models. For instance, the MHG’s endowment in Russia remains a lone example in the HR sector of the post-Soviet space creating an important and sustainable source of revenue (similar to those enjoyed by universities and other public institutions) and encouraging long-term investment in HR work.¹⁷ Collective community funding as a model also constitutes a major shift toward community philanthropy that could reinvigorate the HR movement.¹⁸ Although socially responsible investment has become more popular among private investors, the only HR group that seems to be building on this is the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). FIDH has created its own ethical investment fund, Libertés & Solidarité, which applies HR criteria in stock selection and includes a mechanism for profit-sharing between the FIDH and subscribers.¹⁹ Thus, further steps are needed to promote the adoption of similar practices in the wider HR community, opening it up both to contributions from large institutional donors and to international crowdfunding efforts that go hand in hand with awareness-raising campaigns. Diverse funding provides much more space for experimentation, innovation, and trial and error. Hence, increasing funding diversity and economic sustainability, constructing alternative financial models, and promot-

ing the financial independence of the sector would allow HR work to be more flexible and strategic.²⁰

Paying greater attention to these areas would pave the way for broader initiatives that move beyond the usual logic of NGO-focused, project-based work. These would allow HR groups to continue their work on the ground, building on broad-based community support while remaining part of an international movement. After all, this is what the Helsinki movement was always about: a constant reminder that the issues of the human dimension of security are not just points of debate among states but matters of relevance to a wider civil society movement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are an invitation for HR organizations working in the OSCE region to focus on common priorities. These organizations could encourage OSCE institutions and willing participating States to:

- 1. Provide support, protection, and an enabling environment for journalists, lawyers, and HRDs, in particular by:**
 - a) agreeing on, compiling, and making publicly available lists of group representatives who have been imprisoned or persecuted for their professional activities, as well as coordinating common actions to advocate for their release in cases of imprisonment;
 - b) developing responses in cases where members of the above categories face reprisals. Similar anti-reprisal mechan-

isms adopted by the Council of Europe and the UN could serve as examples for the OSCE to build on;

- c) promoting transnational cooperation among civil society, especially in the field of HR;
- d) providing political, financial, and expert support for international institutions that focus on these groups, including staff who speak the relevant languages and are familiar with the countries in which these groups face the greatest challenges;
- e) bringing together representatives of committed states and civil society experts (i) to classify attacks on journalists, lawyers, and HRDs as egregious disregard for OSCE commitments and as threats to comprehensive security and (ii) to brainstorm ways to counteract and remedy them.

2. Increase the number of supporters and followers of HR groups, including through HR education, in particular by:

- a) involving public relations and advertising agencies to help HR activists frame and package their messages, attract more followers, and build communities of support;
- b) making support for HR-focused higher education programmes conditional on the active engagement of HR activists and encouraging internships at HR organizations;
- c) encouraging international academic exchanges in the field of HR, including internships and collaborative projects;
- d) investing in large-scale educational courses for a wider audience (available online and offline) that explain HR concepts and standards in all of the official languages of the OSCE and are supplemented with practically oriented components such as citizen oversight practices;
- e) training a new cohort of HR educators who can act as multipliers and build connections and networks both locally and across borders.

3. Re-evaluate the economic sustainability and financial independence of the HR sector. While the risks associated with foreign funding may increase in some states, this should be dealt with not by withdrawing support but by searching for other means of contributing, including directly by citizens. Transnational connections in this context should be encouraged. The following steps should therefore be considered:

- a) encouraging the development of various financial models and investment systems for HR work, including endowments, community foundations, impact investment, and crowdfunding platforms;
- b) making the mobilization of domestic funding and support a priority while defending the right to receive international funding for HR work.

Notes

1 Andrei D. Sakharov, “Peace, Progress, Human Rights”, Nobel Lecture, Nobel Prize Organization, 11 December 1975,

2 <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1975/sakharov/lecture/>

3 See Sarah B. Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War: A Transnational History of the Helsinki Network*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011; Paul Goldberg, *The Final Act: The Dramatic, Revealing Story of the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group*, New York: William Morrow & Company, 1988.

4 Ben Schennink, “Helsinki from Below: Origin and Development of the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly (HCA)”, in: IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 1997*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1998, 403-415.

5 See Aaron Rhodes, “The Continuing Challenge of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF)”, in: IFSH (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 1995/1996*, Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1997, 401-410.

6 Claire Bigg, “Helsinki Federation shuts down after fraud scandal”, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 12 December 2007, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1079257.html>

7 Lyudmila M. Alexeyeva, “From our archive. Liudmila Alekseeva: ‘We must continue to defend the victims of state tyranny’ (English translation), *Rights in Russia*, 9 December 2018, <https://www.rightsinrussia.org/alekseeva/>

8 Website of the Polish Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, <https://www.hfh.r.pl/dzialania/edukacja-miedzynarodowa/>

9 Website of the Committee of International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, <https://hrwatch-by.org/en>

10 Baranov Константин, Объездчикова Алена. Комитет международного контроля за ситуацией с правами человека в Республике Беларусь как пример комплексной тактики защиты прав человека на пост-советском пространстве. Воронеж: Артефакт, 2012. 32 с. [Konstantin Baranov/Alyona Ob'ezdchikova, Committee of International Control over the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Belarus as an Example of a Complex Tactic of Defending Human Rights in the Post-Soviet Space, Voronezh: Artefact Publishing, 2012, p. 32].

11 “Memorandum on the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on 19 December 2010 events”, Special Rapporteur of the Committee of International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, 22 February 2010, <https://hrwatch-by.org/en/special-rapporteur>

12 Emmanuel Decaux, OSCE Moscow Mechanism Rapporteur’s Report on Belarus, ODIHR.GAL/39/11/Corr.1*, 16 June 2011, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/b/78705.pdf>; Special Rapporteur of the Committee of International Control over the Human Rights Situation in Belarus, “Final human rights assessment of the events of 19 December 2010 in Minsk, Belarus”, http://hrwatch-by.org/sites/default/files/Final_HRights_Assessment_of_19-12-2010_in_Minsk-eng_final.pdf

13 OSCE ODIHR, Council of Europe’s Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, 2nd edition, Warsaw 2010, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/73405>; OSCE ODIHR, Handbook on Monitoring Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, Warsaw 2011, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/82979>; OSCE ODIHR, Trial-Monitoring: A Reference Manual for Practitioners, Warsaw 2008, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/31636>; OSCE ODIHR, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Handbook for Monitoring Administrative Justice, Warsaw 2013, <https://www.osce.org/albania/105271>

14 Amnesty International has a slightly broader “prisoner of conscience” designation for those who are imprisoned because of who they are or what they believe. Several groups regularly update

lists of “political prisoners” (according to the Human Rights Centre “Viasna”, 907 people as of 6 December 2021 in Belarus alone; see <https://prisoners.spring96.org/en>).

14 OSCE ODIHR, Human Rights Defenders in the OSCE Region: Our Collective Conscience, Warsaw 2007, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/29714>; OSCE ODIHR, The Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Selected OSCE Participating States, Warsaw 2021, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/493867>

15 See Вашкевич Александр. Стандарты ОБСЕ / под редакцией К. Баранова, А. Казлюка // Трансграничные аспекты свободы передвижения: международные стандарты и практические проблемы на примере Беларуси, России и Украины. – Львов: Лига-Пресс, 2015. – с. 44-60 [Alexander Vashkevich, “OSCE Standards”, in: Konstantin Baranov/Alexey Kazliuk (eds.), Transborder Aspects of Freedom of Movement: International Standards and Practical Problems in the Examples of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine, Lviv: Liga-Press, 2015, pp. 44-60].

16 See for example the reference to the OSCE ODIHR event “Human Rights Communication 2.0”, Akvarium Klub, Budapest, Hungary, 5 December 2017. See also the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee campaign “For the people”, <https://www.bghelsinki.org/en/campaigns/bhc-for-the-people>. Further examples in-

clude experiments with gaming innovations undertaken by Russia’s non-profit sector (see for instance Tatiana Tolsteneva, “Technology and gaming innovations bring new life to Russian NGOs”, Open-GlobalRights, 12 September 2019, <https://www.openglobalrights.org/technology-and-gaming-innovations-bring-new-life-to-russian-ngos>) and an interactive miniseries with young HR activists as main protagonists (see <https://lateralsummer.com/whoareu/>), a collaboration between the film studio Lateral Summer, the MHG, and the independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta.

17 Website of the MHG’s HR endowment, <https://endowment.mhg.ru/>

18 For example, see references to the #ShiftThePower movement on the website of the Global Fund for Community Foundations, <https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/what-we-stand-for/shiftthepower/>

19 Website of the FIDH, <https://www.fidh.org/fr/com/faire-un-don/faire-un-placement-solidaire-6650>

20 See the analysis of diverse financial models in the report by the CSIS Human Rights Initiative: Edwin Rekosh, “Rethinking the human rights business model: New and innovative structures and strategies for local impact”, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 14 June 2017, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/rethinking-human-rights-business-model>

Annex: List of active Helsinki groups and committees

Name as of 2021	Name at creation (if different)	Year of creation	Website
Albania: Albanian Helsinki Committee	Albanian Forum for the Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms	1990	https://ahc.org.al/
Armenia: Helsinki Committee of Armenia		1996	http://armhels.com/
Armenia: Helsinki Citizens Assembly – Armenia		1992	
Armenia: Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Vanadzor		1998	https://hcav.am/en/
Armenia: Helsinki Association of Armenia		1997	
Austria: Austrian Helsinki Association		2008	http://austrianhelsinki.at/
Azerbaijan: Helsinki Citizens Assembly – Azerbaijan		1992	
Belarus: Belarusian Helsinki Committee		1995	https://www.belhelcom.org/
Bosnia and Herzegovina: Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (hCa) Banja Luka		1996	http://hcabl.org/
Bosnia and Herzegovina: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina		1995	
Bulgaria: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee		1992	https://www.bghelsinki.org
Canada: Canadian Helsinki Watch Group*		1985	
Croatia: Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights		1993	http://www.hho.hr/
Czech Republic: Czech Helsinki Committee	Czechoslovak Helsinki Committee	1988	http://www.helcom.cz/
Denmark: Danish Helsinki Committee for Human Rights		1985	http://helsinkicommittee.dk
France: European Assembly of Citizens		1990	http://www.aechca.fr/
Georgia: Georgian Helsinki Committee*		1976–1977	

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Name as of 2021	Name at creation (if different)	Year of creation	Website
Germany: German Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Security and Cooperation in Europe*			
Greece: Greek Helsinki Monitor		1993	https://greekhelsinki.wordpress.com/
Hungary: Hungarian Helsinki Committee		1989	https://helsinki.hu/
Italy: Italian Federation for Human Rights – Italian Helsinki Committee		1987	https://fidu.it/
Kazakhstan: Almaty Helsinki Committee*		1990	
Kosovo: Kosovar Helsinki Committee*			
Lithuania: Lithuanian Helsinki Group*		1976–1983, re-established in 1988	
Moldova: Moldovan Helsinki Committee for Human Rights*		1992	
Moldova: Helsinki Citizens' Assembly – Moldova*			
Montenegro: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Montenegro			
The Netherlands: Netherlands Helsinki Committee		1987	https://www.nhc.nl/
Norway: Norwegian Helsinki Committee		1977	https://www.nhc.no/
North Macedonia: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights		1994	https://mhc.org.mk/
Poland: Helsinki Committee in Poland and Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights	Helsinki Committee in Poland	1982, known as the HFHR since 1989	https://www.hfhr.pl/
Romania: Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Romania – the Helsinki Committee		1990	https://apador.org/
Russia: Moscow Helsinki Group		1976, re-established in 1989	https://mhg.ru/
Serbia: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia		1994	http://www.helsinki.org.rs/
Slovakia: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Slovakia		1993	https://www.helcom.sk/

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Name as of 2021	Name at creation (if different)	Year of creation	Website
Slovenia: Helsinki Monitor of Slovenia*		1994	
Spain: Helsinki España – Human Dimension		1992	helsinkiespana.org
Sweden: Civil Rights Defenders	Swedish Helsinki Committee	1982	https://crd.org/
Switzerland: Swiss Helsinki Committee		1977	https://shv-ch.org/
Turkey: Helsinki Citizens' Assembly		1990	https://hyd.org.tr/
Ukraine: Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union	Ukrainian Helsinki Group	1976–1981, re-established in 2004 as Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union	https://helsinki.org.ua/
Ukraine: International Helsinki Association for Human Rights		2011	https://ihahr.org/
USA: Human Rights Watch	Helsinki Watch	1978	https://www.hrw.org/

* Groups that are no longer active or for which there is no information on their activities.

