

Minutes of the meeting of FBE Human Rights Commission 31 July 2020

By Skype with Artur, Monique, Peter, Wout, Karina, Malte, Enrico, Massimiliano, Sara plus apologies Fatima and Nicola, who could not join the call)

1. Artur opened the meeting and reported on the activities in the last month, and gave everyone the news that the FBE Presidency complimented Human Rights Commission on our work, and said that we are the best commission.
2. Artur reported on the articles he has put on the website on Turkey: on the situation of Ebru Tontik and Aytac Unsal who are on hunger strike, and were taken to hospital on 30 July and of the protests by the Istanbul Bar and the other large bar associations. The Turkish Government is passing a law to break up the big bar associations, and to create many small ones, which will reduce the effectiveness of the large bar associations.

He has put an article about the Hagia Sofia and the Turkish government decree that from 24 July it is no longer a museum and is now a mosque. Artur also reported on the plan of the Polish government to come out of the Istanbul Convention on violence against women. The government says it is against Poland to be in the Convention.

Artur has received a request from the Istanbul Bar for the FBE to sign a support letter.

As soon as Artur receives the letter he will share it with the Commission.

3. Peter reported on the situation in Turkey. Lawyers for Lawyers have been very involved in supporting the lawyers on hunger strike, and also the protests of the Istanbul Bar. In the Netherlands they wanted to publish their support for the Turkish lawyers and bar associations, and sent the advertisement, which included the FBE to the Turkish newspapers. The large newspapers would not print it, but some smaller newspapers did. The Turkish government is trying to cut down on social media to restrict free speech. Artur asked Peter to write a report for the Human Rights Commission and this will go to 35 members of the Commission.
4. Wout reported he is member of the Lawyers for Lawyers Latin American Focus Group, and he is a member of the Colombia Caravana.
5. Sara reported that after a virtual meeting with Danilo Rueda of the Colombian Inter Church Commission for Peace and Justice with the 9 members of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights there has been a question raised in the Parliament about the misuse of equipment and training supplied by the UK government which is now being used to as surveillance of 130 journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders.
6. Massimiliano confirmed support for what has been put on the website about Turkey and support for the advertisements in the Turkish press.
7. Karina reported that all is good in Germany, and nothing to report on human rights

8. Monique reported that the FBE Presidency met on 27 July. There has been no reply to Patrick Dillen's message to the Ukrainian Bar who have said they want to join the FBE.

It was agreed that we should do something, and Izaskun has contact with them and we must follow up why there has been no reply.

Action: Artur and Izaskun will investigate what has happened with Ukrainian Bar.

9. Monique reported on a webinar from German Government and she will write a report about it to share with the commission.
10. Colombia: Monique asked about Colombia, and Sara reported that there will be no delegation this year, and the next one is likely in August /September 2021. In the meantime there have been virtual meetings. Artur reported that there will be the International Law Congress 2021 organised in Colombia in November 2021. Sara asked if it will include human rights. If it is a commercial conference it would be good to raise the United Nations Guiding principles on Business & Human Rights.
11. Enrico: reported that he had nothing in particular to report on this occasion.
12. Day of the Endangered Lawyer: Monique reported that it will be 24 January 2021, and the spotlight will be on Azerbaijan.

It was agreed that we should publicise on the website in December asking all members to organise something in their bar associations and jurisdictions. Artur suggested everyone read about Azerbaijan and write something for their own bar associations.

It was agreed that a notice from the Presidency to all FBE members should be sent before October congress in Paris to ask members to "save the date" of 24 January 2021.

Action: ask the Presidency to send the "save the date" notice to all members.

13. Monique reported on the Paris Congress in October. It is not certain whether it will face to face or virtual. The Presidency will decide in October.
14. Malte reported on the 5 person commission headed by the President of the Munich Bar. They have written a 3 page report, and Malte will make enquiries. Monique reported that the Munich Bar is no longer a member of the FBE.

The meeting closed and we agreed to meet again as soon as there is more to report. Artur will arrange the next meeting.