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HISTORISCHE MITTEILUNGEN – BEIHEFTE 98

# Human Rights Leagues in Europe (1898–2016)

Edited by Wolfgang Schmale  
and Christopher Treiblmayr



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## HISTORISCHE MITTEILUNGEN – BEIHEFTE

Im Auftrage der *Ranke-Gesellschaft. Vereinigung für Geschichte im öffentlichen Leben e.V.* herausgegeben von Jürgen Elvert

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Coverpicture: A significant number of women participated actively in the work of the various European human rights leagues. Among them was Dorota Kłuszyńska (1874–1952) in the Polish League.

Source: National Digital Archives, Poland



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Vienna, 1 March 2017

*Wolfgang Schmale and Christopher Treiblmayr*

## FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE AUSTRIAN LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2016, the Austrian League for Human Rights – the oldest and most traditional human rights organisation in Austria – celebrated its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Its history is closely connected to the awakening of an awareness of human rights that began with the foundation of the French *Ligue française pour la défense des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* in 1898. There have been and still are significant interdependencies as well as separate and joint developments in many European countries that are inextricably linked to the political history of the respective nations – in fact, of all of Europe and beyond. All national leagues for human rights display on their banners a reference to the universal human rights, which have in the meantime been enshrined in many international and national documents as well. On the other hand, every country also has its own particular history and characteristics and its own pressing problems; hence every history is related to the respective political, social and geographical situation.

To revisit and closely examine the past was a key purpose of the workshop organised by the University of Vienna in cooperation with the Austrian League for Human Rights in May 2014. Probably for the first time in history, representatives of so many human rights leagues and scholars took the opportunity to come together and engage in scientific exchange. In this context, I would like to thank the Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies of the University of Vienna as a whole, and in particular project head o. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Schmale, who not only enabled the organisation of the symposium, but also played a very active role. I also want to thank Dr. Christopher Treiblmayr, lecturer at the University of Vienna, who for many years has been devoting his time to researching the history of the Austrian League for Human Rights. In doing so, he has also directed his attention to the global interdependencies, thereby providing the conference with a more than adequate scientific framework. We were very pleased that this commitment brought together experts from across Europe and beyond with the goal of fostering intensive scientific discourse and sharing knowledge not only about the first and leading human rights organisation, but also about its wide international network established over many decades.

Thanks to the scholars and scientists who not only participated in the conference, but have drafted their lectures into contributions to this volume, we are now able to make the results of this research available to the public. My gratitude likewise goes out to the scientists who have written articles on the development of the human rights leagues in certain countries despite being unable to attend the meeting.

These contributions have made it possible to compile a book dedicated not just to the history of the Austrian League, but also to the developments in the various countries represented at the conference, thus reflecting contemporary history in the individual countries as well as the overall political and social situation across Europe and beyond. Future research will undoubtedly profit greatly from the results of this exchange.

The cooperation effected in this project is also of significant value in a different context, however: It exemplifies a way forwards in terms of how internationally established institutions like the network of leagues for human rights can work together more efficiently. We live in times where national mechanisms often fail in the handling of human rights issues, and many existing problems can be understood and processed only in more general and global contexts. The exchange of experiences and a better understanding of the history as well as of specific features of the individual leagues represent the keys to even closer collaboration, and I am confident that our conference and this volume can help to unleash some of that potential.

*Dr. Barbara Helige*  
*Former President of the Austrian Association of Judges*

FOREWORD BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL  
OF THE *FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES LIGUES  
DES DROITS DE L'HOMME* (FIDH)

The Death Penalty as an Area of Activity  
of the FIDH and the Leagues for Human Rights

The slow but steady process of the abolition of the death penalty provides insights into how national and international human rights movements interact in order to achieve this goal. That the abolitionist community can proudly state that two thirds of the world's countries have eliminated capital punishment is a result of the involvement of activists fighting simultaneously on two fronts: national and international.

Abolitionists face two obstacles: Firstly, criminal law is a matter of sovereignty, and each state has the right to determine its own criminal law offenses and sanctions. Secondly, and in a broader context, even if states are bound by international human rights, the death penalty is *stricto sensu* not forbidden by international law.<sup>1</sup> Neither top-down nor bottom-up, the abolition campaign must therefore be conducted on two hopefully converging parallel paths – against geometrical truth.

Formally, the abolition of capital punishment requires an act of parliament expressly stating that the penal code no longer includes the death penalty as a possible sanction for a crime. Nevertheless, there is generally a gap between the formal simplicity of abolition and its spectacular performativity (literally giving life to people condemned to die) on the one hand and the process leading to the adoption of such legislation on the other, which involves many twists and turns as demonstrated by the history preceding the enactment of Article 1 of the French law abolishing the death penalty (“The death penalty is abolished”) on 9 October 1981.<sup>2</sup> The question of abolition in France goes back to the Revolution of 1789 and has been topical throughout the country's history ever since. The push towards abolition lost momentum for several decades after 1908 when the abolitionists, including the French “*ligueurs*” and politicians close to the French *Ligue*

- 1 The Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is the only universal international treaty to prohibit executions and provide essential mechanisms to entrench the abolition of the death penalty in the world. States must sign and ratify it to be bound by it, however.
- 2 Loi n° 81-908 du 9 octobre 1981 portant abolition de la peine de mort, in: *JO*, 10 October 1981, Article 1: “La peine de mort est abolie.”

*des droits de l'homme* (LDH), were defeated. But side by side with numerous other organisations and persons of standing, the French League remained intensely engaged at the international level, for example by lending its full support in 1953 to the vain attempts to spare Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, found guilty of spying for the U.S.S.R. in the U.S., the electric chair. Beyond this individual case, the LDH has regularly called for the universal abolition of the death penalty since the 1950's, denouncing executions wherever they take place.

At least three actors have played central roles in the French League's embracing of the fight against the death penalty. Firstly, the founding of the League in 1898 occasioned by the trial of Alfred Dreyfus (condemned to deportation, the death penalty for political crimes having been abolished in 1848) was intimately tied to the issue of wrongful conviction. Today, wrongful convictions are a favourite target of activists in countries which have retained the death penalty. Secondly and more broadly, the League has always been a forum for political leading lights, whether they were members or just supporters of the League. Thus Robert Badinter, former French Minister of Justice, paid homage to the LDH as well as to other organisations in his famous speech on 17 September 1981 – the speech in which he outlined to parliamentarians his draft proposal for the abolition of the death penalty.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, it is not coincidental that the set of arguments against the death penalty became internationalised during the 1950s. These were years of reawakening for the International Federation, which had been founded in 1922 by the French and the German leagues but had been forced to terminate its activities due to World War II.<sup>4</sup> In conjunction with the growth of the international human rights corpus, this reawakening would provide renewed momentum to the abolitionist movement. Today, national leagues and international federations have joined forces under the auspices of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty – an entity serving both as an umbrella and a platform for assorted activists who wish to use all available means to achieve their objective.

The Guinean story, closely followed by the Coalition and its members, is a telling example of how domestic and international mechanisms are intertwined in the process leading to abolition, and of how gradual that process can be. In effect an abolitionist country with a moratorium on executions since 2002, Guinea finally took it to the next level on 4 July 2016 when its parliament adopted a new penal code and a new penal procedure, in both of which mention of the death penalty is conspicuously absent. This was a clear victory for the struggle against the death penalty – a victory that could not have been achieved were it not for the very specific international context in which it took place and the treaties to which

3 Available, for example, on the website of the French National Assembly, <http://www.peinedemort.org/document/4738>, consulted 20 August 2016: “Comment ne pas souligner que toutes les grandes associations internationales qui militent de par le monde pour la défense des libertés et des droits de l'homme – Amnesty international, l'Association internationale des droits de l'homme, la Ligue des droits de l'homme – ont fait campagne pour que vienne l'abolition de la peine de mort?”

4 See Gilles Manceron's contribution in this volume.

Guinea is a signatory. It is indeed noteworthy that the final step towards the abolition of capital punishment in Guinea occurred shortly after the 6<sup>th</sup> World Congress Against the Death Penalty, held in Oslo from 21 to 23 June 2016 and coordinated by the French organisation *Ensemble contre la peine de mort*. Acknowledging the event's impact, Guinean Member of Parliament and congress participant Fode Amara Bocar Marega stated: "The benefits from Oslo continue (...). The fight goes on with even more conviction."<sup>5</sup>

As to be expected, the national and international movements which have most definitely played an essential role in the abolitionist struggle are now facing new and old problems. Amongst these problems are: obtaining funding – an increasingly difficult task in light of the growing competition between organisations; identifying leaders with broad appeal and legitimacy in an internationalised civil society; and eliciting the participation of academics and intellectuals to the cause. In this respect, the recent creation of international academic networks deserves special mention.<sup>6</sup>

The arguments against the death penalty were formulated some time ago.<sup>7</sup> If today's politicians are to be influenced or constrained by them, however, they need to be examined periodically and maybe even elaborated anew. In Europe, like elsewhere, many a politician would seize any opportunity and latch onto any pretext to resort to or even reinstitute the death penalty as a means of scoring political points and silencing opponents. Unfortunately, this scenario seems to be currently unfolding in Turkey and the Philippines, notwithstanding their respective strong civil societies.

In summary, the abolition of the death penalty, far from being "natural" or "obvious", is part of a slow and difficult process of "civilisation". Without dedicated commitment and willingness to learn from the past, this process is subject to setbacks and reversals.

Learning from the past in order to shape a European civil society so urgently needed in the euro-sceptical times we are experiencing: That is the remarkable intent of the present volume, the outstanding result of a workshop held at the University of Vienna in May 2014. Not only does it provide insights into particular domestic instances of a common universal idea (the defence of human rights), it also explains the birth, fall and spectacular rebirth of that idea's umbrella organisation: the FIDH, which since the 1980s has become truly international, not just European. Decisive for the leagues in question, often too immersed in their

5 Quoted from Maurice Gauer, Abolition of the death penalty in Guinea, published 5 July 2016, <http://www.worldcoalition.org/Abolition-of-the-death-penalty-in-Guinea.html>, consulted 20 August 2016.

6 See the websites of the International Academic Network for the Abolition of Capital Punishment (REPECAP), <http://www.academicsforabolition.net>, and Universities Against the Death Penalty – A Worldwide Network, <http://www.uio.no/english/about/collaboration/universities-against-death-penalty>, both consulted 20 August 2016.

7 See for example Benoît Basse, *De la peine de mort en philosophie. Quel fondement pour l'abolition?*, Paris 2016.

current problems to stop the clock and reflect about themselves, this analysis also offers a unique vision of the past century making it deserving of the attention of the broadest possible audience.

*Florence Bellivier*  
*Professor of Law at University of Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense*  
*Former President of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty*

# THE HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUES

## An Introduction

*Wolfgang Schmale / Christopher Treiblmayr*

The study of the history of human rights leagues in Europe (and beyond) in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries promises interesting insights into various fields of interest: the development of democracy, the strength or weakness of human rights in constitutional practice, the forming of national and transnational networks between individuals as well as between different associations such as human rights leagues, the establishment of certain values in society (like peace as opposed to war, or de-colonisation as opposed to colonialism), charity issues closely linked to the practice of human rights, the building of a European or even global civil society, and so forth.

The French *Ligue des droits de l'homme* (LDH), founded in 1898 in the context of the Dreyfus affair, was the first such league and provided the model for all further leagues for human rights in Europe. For nearly half a century, it served as the keystone for an emerging transnational network of human rights activists. Nearly a third of all leagues mentioned in various documents from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had been founded in France by exiles, and another fifth continued their activity in French exile after their respective home countries had fallen under dictatorship. Without a doubt, the most notable case is that of the Italian League during the interwar period. The French League, with some involvement by the German League, was also the driving force behind the foundation of an international umbrella organisation, the *Ligue internationale* or *Fédération internationale des (ligues des) droits de l'homme* (FIDH)<sup>1</sup>, in 1922. The various leagues share their commitment to a universal ideal of human rights based in the revolutionary concept of human rights embodied in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789.<sup>2</sup>

To this day, the archives of the French League for the interwar period are the most comprehensive of all the known archives, although Emmanuel Naquet

- 1 In the era before World War II, both names were used for the International Federation. See the contributions by Gilles Manceron and Christopher Treiblmayr in this volume.
- 2 See Wolfgang Schmale, Grund- und Menschenrechte in vormodernen und modernen Gesellschaften Europas, in: Margarete Grandner / Wolfgang Schmale / Michael Weinzierl (eds.), *Grund- und Menschenrechte. Historische Perspektiven – Aktuelle Problematiken*, Vienna / Munich 2002, 29–76, 69f. We would like to thank John Hodgshon, Brita Pohl, Stephan Stockinger and Thomas Tretzmüller for their translation and proofreading support.

bemoans a number of lacunae.<sup>3</sup> Not all leagues established and kept archives; others did, but their archives have been lost or are presumed lost. The French League's archives were returned by the Russian Federation after the fall of the Eastern Bloc. They had initially been confiscated by the Nazis and later by the Red Army; they were transported to Moscow, where they disappeared in the Special Secret Archives of the Soviet Secret Services for several decades.<sup>4</sup> This is also where parts of the pre-war archives of the Austrian League, founded in 1926, had ended up, as Christopher Treiblmayr shows in his contribution to this volume. Within the scope of a research project by the two editors, we were able to locate these files in Moscow.<sup>5</sup> There are at least two leagues today whose archives cover the entire period from the year of their foundation up to the present day – the French and the Austrian League for Human Rights.

With regard to other leagues, the situation varies from a near complete lack of documents available for the period before World War II to a considerable number of documents dispersed among different archives, libraries, institutions, private estates etc. The French League's journal, "Les Cahiers des droits de l'homme", provides information about various pre-World-War-II leagues, but as a source is no substitute for a league archive. The pre-war archive of the French LDH also contains documents concerning other leagues.<sup>6</sup> On the whole, this information is precious but nevertheless unsatisfactory, to say the least.

The present volume provides an apposite description of the variety of archive situations. All contributions (except for the one on the Belgian League) are based on archive material. Tenacious research promises to prove rewarding, as Izabela Mrzygłód shows for the Polish League, Paul Fonck for the Luxembourgish League, Michalis Moraitidis for the Greek League, Stilyan Deyanov for the Romanian League, or Doris Leuenberger and Patrick Herzig for the Swiss League, among others. Some of these authors were the first persons ever to search for archive material on the respective leagues, and they were able to fill gaps by 'data mining' newspapers, magazines and other periodicals. After the completion

3 Emmanuel Naquet, *Pour l'Humanité. La Ligue des droits de l'homme de l'affaire Dreyfus à la défaite de 1940*, Rennes 2014, 30.

4 See Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand, Les archives de la Ligue des droits de l'homme à la BDIC, in: Sonia Combe / Grégory Cingal (eds.), *Retour de Moscou. Les archives de la Ligue des droits de l'homme 1898–1940*, Paris 2004, 11–16. Sonia Combe, Paris-Moscou, aller-retour: historique d'une spoliation et d'une restitution, in: *ibid.*, 17–26.

5 The project under the participation of Thomas Brendel was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF, Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, project number P 20475).

6 Both are to be found in the *Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine* (BDIC), Paris-Nanterre, <http://www.bdic.fr/>, consulted 6 December 2016. The following boxes, summed up in the inventory as "relations extérieures" of the French *Ligue des droits de l'homme*, contain portfolios relating to various leagues: BDIC, F delta res 0798/54 – F delta res 0798/60. In fact, sometimes the documents of one particular league are to be found not only in the respective portfolio, but also scattered across the portfolios of other leagues.

of the Europeana newspaper digitisation project, this may become a practicable option, although the inner balance of the project is far from satisfactory.<sup>7</sup>

An international workshop at the University of Vienna in May 2014, organised by the two editors of the present volume, assembled scholars and activists from eight countries, all concerned – some through historical research, some through human rights activities – with human rights leagues. This workshop was the first attempt to cross-link research on different human rights leagues and instigate further and more in-depth investigation where little or no historical research had been carried out before.<sup>8</sup> The present volume presents the revised conference papers as well as supplementary articles dealing with (in alphabetical order) the Austrian League, the Belgian League, the Bulgarian League, the French League, the pre- and post-war German Leagues, the Hellenic League, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, the Italian League, the Luxembourgish League, the Polish League, the Romanian League, the Spanish League, and the Swiss League. Table 1 lists the leagues resp. organisations represented in the volume in the order of their foundation. The “Forum” section contains contributions that provide a first insight into a particular league’s history and thus aim to motivate further research.

<i>Year of foundation</i>	<i>Country</i>
1898	France
1901	Belgium
1913	Spain
1918	Greece
1921	Poland
1922	Bulgaria; Germany; International Federation; Italy (in French exile)
1923	Luxembourg; Romania
1926	Austria
1928	Switzerland
1986	Turkey <sup>9</sup>

Table 1.

The majority of the leagues were forced to interrupt their activities at some point, especially during National Socialism. The first league thus affected was the German League, which was forcibly dissolved by the Nazi regime. Others, like the Austrian League, were prohibited or dissolved themselves in 1938 or 1939, and the French League was unable to function after 1940/41. Many league members

7 See <http://www.europeana-newspapers.eu/>, consulted 6 December 2016.

8 See also Wolfgang Schmale / Christopher Treiblmayr, Human Rights Leagues and Civil Society (1898–ca. 1970s), in: *Historische Mitteilungen* 27/2015, 186–208.

9 *İnsan Hakları Derneği* (İHD/Human Rights Association).

became victims of National Socialist persecution and extermination. This is one of the reasons why much knowledge regarding the pre-war history of the human rights leagues is lost, and the long-term success of the National Socialist extinction of the memory of the leagues and the personalities who shaped them is a sad fact demonstrated by the contributions collected in this volume. It therefore also aims to counteract this loss of memory.

Some leagues succeeded in founding exile organisations outside their country. In order to continue their human rights activities, for example, European emigrants founded a new governing body in New York, called the International League of the Rights of Man and for the New Democracy, in 1941. In this they collaborated with the civil rights activist Roger N. Baldwin, whose name also appears among the subscribers of “*Les Cahiers des droits de l’homme*”.<sup>10</sup> As a small lobbying group, its members initially saw its role in an intellectual contribution to the liberation of Europe from National Socialism. Democracy and freedom were among their core values, as they believed that disregard for human rights and basic freedoms had been one of the fundamental causes of World War II. The group began to expand its focus toward the end of the war, starting to campaign for worldwide respect for human rights as part of a universal approach to the notion. Regional committees were founded for Latin America, Europe, Asia and Africa, which dealt with the question of an International Bill of Rights among other things. The “Jewish question” also played a large role in their deliberations.<sup>11</sup> This new umbrella organisation continued its activities after the end of World War II. In 1947, besides organisations like the International Arbitration League in London and the *Comité Mexicano contra el Racismo* in Mexico, its affiliates included an Argentinian and an Italian league, a league in Belgian Congo, a Haitian league, a German exile league in London, a Hungarian and a Spanish exile league in Paris, and the Swiss, Luxembourgish and Austrian leagues.<sup>12</sup>

By 1944/45, the French League had also resumed operations<sup>13</sup> and was working on the re-establishment of the international umbrella organisation. After the end of World War II, the latter referred to itself only as FIDH and not as *Ligue internationale* so as to avoid being confused with the New York International League. Shortly before the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948, the efforts to reunite the leagues were announced in a circular of the re-established Austrian League. The members listed there were the leagues of Germany, Argentina, Austria, Spain (in exile), France,

10 See BDIC, F delta res 798/46.

11 See Jan Eckel, The International League for the Rights of Man, Amnesty International, and the Changing Fate of Human Rights Activism from the 1940s through the 1970s, in: *Humanity. An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 4/2013, no. 2, 183–214, 184ff. See also Schmale / Treiblmayr, Human Rights Leagues, 206.

12 See folder Presenting the International League for the Rights of Man, 1947, Folder I.L.H.R. (New York) I, XXI/1, Archives of the Austrian League for Human Rights.

13 See *Les Cahiers des droits de l’homme*, 1945, no. 1.

Hungary (in exile), Italy, Luxembourg, Holland and Switzerland, as well as the International League in New York.<sup>14</sup>

The latter would not remain a member of the FIDH for long, however. The two umbrella organisations began to compete for member leagues, some of which avoided the conflict by joining both organisations. The United Nations also settled on this diplomatic solution: as early as 1947, the International League had achieved “consultative status”<sup>15</sup>; the FIDH, which progressively re-established itself, was given the same status in 1952.<sup>16</sup> Two international umbrella organisations thus contributed to the process of universalisation and codification of human rights, which is characteristic of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and found its expression (for example) in the creation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in 1950, the establishment of the European Court of Human Rights in 1959, or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966. After two catastrophic world wars and the horrors of the Holocaust, the idea of basic human rights became the doxa of our time – at least on the level of discourse, as Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann put it.<sup>17</sup> In petitions, memoranda and expert opinions, the International League and the FIDH advised institutions like the United Nations of cases of human rights violations around the globe and submitted opinions on planned legal documents or agreements.<sup>18</sup> This universalisation of the very idea of human rights naturally did not mean there were no more ‘national’ cases of human rights violations, but universal respect for human rights increasingly gained importance.

Germany and Austria, both occupied by the four allied powers after 1945, had to deal with specific problems resulting from this situation. In Germany, the separation into a western and an eastern part aggravated the problems, causing the ‘German League’ (for details, see the contribution by Lora Wildenthal), at least in Berlin, to evolve into something of a charity organisation for East German refugees as well as for displaced persons, dispersed families etc. in general. In addition, the German League also had to deal with spies threatening to undermine the organisation.

Most of the leagues were menaced by political circumstances both during the interwar period and after World War II. Their general political orientation was obviously more or less leftist and to some extent cosmopolitan, but between the

14 See Liga-Korrespondenz XI/1948, Folder FIDH I, XX/1, Archives of the Austrian League for Human Rights.

15 See letter by Fritz Kaufmann, International League for the Rights of Man, to the Austrian League for Human Rights, 14 May 1947, Folder I.L.H.R. (New York) I, XXI/1, Archives of the Austrian League for Human Rights.

16 See for example a letter by Leopold Zechner and Hermann C. Mühlberger to the *Fédération Internationale des Droits de l’Homme*, 9 July 1952, Folder FIDH I, XX/1, Archives of the Austrian League for Human Rights.

17 Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, Einführung. Zur Genealogie der Grund- und Menschenrechte, in: idem (ed.), *Moralpolitik. Geschichte der Menschenrechte im 20. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 2010, 7–37.

18 On the International League, see Eckel, *The International League*.

wars the delineations between various political movements and orientations were anything but sharp and clear. As this volume's contributions show, the cosmopolitan orientation of the human rights leagues was significantly – if not exclusively – influenced by international Freemasonry. The latter's guiding idea of tolerance had already led it to take an active part in the American and French declarations of human rights.<sup>19</sup> The nature of these close personal ties between Freemasonry and human rights leagues, however, is hitherto clearly established only for the pre-war Austrian League by Christopher Treiblmayr's contribution as well as for the pre-war Spanish League by Paul Aubert's contribution. In general, the leagues' members were forced to cope with their political classification by other parties for reasons of propaganda aimed at disqualifying the human rights activists and obstructing their activities.

A close look at the history of the human rights leagues also shows that the effectiveness of their work suffered from internal conflict and competition between the organisations, i.e. that the leagues were by no means homogeneous entities. William D. Irvine, for example, shows in his contribution that even Hitler and the Nazi regime in Germany were not met with unanimous rejection by all members of the French League. Similarly, the evaluation of Stalinism and the Soviet Union in general remained a point of discord. And for long periods of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dominance of the French League meant that the transnational public spheres that established themselves within the league network were organised according to a logic of centre and periphery.<sup>20</sup>

This, of course, corresponded to the respective leagues' actual importance. Without a doubt, the case of the French League is unique in the early history of human rights leagues. It owes its foundation to a major political, social, and of course legal issue: the Dreyfus affair. This fact contributed to the focusing of its activities on monitoring and legal aid as well as the fight against anti-Semitism, which was also typical of many other leagues. It is a well-known fact that the Dreyfus affair, while primarily a national affair of the French Third Republic in crisis, provoked an echo across Europe, if not the entire Western world.<sup>21</sup> But what is the historical significance of the interwovenness of the Dreyfus affair and the foundation of the LDH? Naquet concludes: "The foundation of the LDH reacted to a crisis of a republican state imperilled by a form of anti-republicanism (...)".<sup>22</sup>

19 See Helmut Reinalter, *Die Freimaurer*, Munich 2006, 44.

20 On the structure of transnational public spheres in general, see Andrea Komlosy, *Globalgeschichte. Methoden und Theorien*, Vienna / Cologne / Weimar 2011, 33f.

21 The French research literature is discussed by Naquet, *Pour l'Humanité*, Introduction and chapter 1. International research literature is abundant. Details are not listed here as a simple search using the keyword "Dreyfus affair" in the world's most important national library catalogues (we used Karlsruhe Virtual Catalogue) provides evidence of the global interest in the issue.

22 Naquet, *Pour l'Humanité*, 83: "la fondation de la LDH répond à une crise de l'État républicain en butte à une forme d'antirépublicanisme".

The Spanish League also owes its initial<sup>23</sup> foundation to a court case, namely that of Francisco Ferrer Guardia, which similarly gained some European and Western notoriety. Apart from a 655-page volume published in Madrid in 1910<sup>24</sup>, the Australian Catholic Truth Society, for example, published a booklet of 32 pages on “Ferrer the anarchist: the facts of his life and trial”.<sup>25</sup> Other contemporary pamphlets, booklets and books were published in 1909, 1910 or later. Nearly every European national library lists “Juicio ordinario seguido ante los tribunales militares en plaza de Barcelona contra Francisco Ferrer Guardia”, Madrid 1909, in its catalogues<sup>26</sup>, and the French *Grande Loge de France* likewise collected material on the Ferrer case.<sup>27</sup> These are some formal indicators of the notoriety of the Ferrer affair, but according to Paul Aubert (in this volume), the Spanish League in the proper sense of its name was founded as *Liga Española para la Defensa de los Derechos del Hombre y del Ciudadano* in 1913.

The origin of most other leagues is less spectacular than that of the French and Spanish organisations. As mentioned above, the Italian League (LIDU) was founded in French exile in 1922 (the most probable date) under the instigation of FIDH vice-president Aline Ménard-Dorian (see Eric Vial’s contribution in this volume). One of the LIDU’s leading figures, Luigi Campolongo, “participated in the LDH’s protests against the legal assassination of the libertarian pedagogue Francisco Ferrer in Barcelona in 1909” (Vial in this volume). Like the Italian League, the majority of human rights leagues in interwar Europe were founded in close relation with the *Ligue internationale* resp. the FIDH. The key role of the anti-clerical, leftist republican and salonnière Ménard-Dorian in the FIDH, the involvement of Ernesta Cassola, Luigi Campolongo’s wife, in the Italian League, and the contributions of many other female activists mentioned in this volume all indicate that a significant number of women actively participated in the work of the leagues. Many of them were women’s rights activists, and the leagues provided them with an opportunity to network – a fact we wanted to emphasise with the cover image (Polish Dorota Kłuszyńska).

At any rate, it should be noted that only the French League developed a stable structure and organisation even before World War I and was able to maintain it up to the moment of the creation of the *État français* in 1940 under Maréchal Pétain.

23 The history of the foundation of the Spanish League is difficult to elucidate. See the contribution by Paul Aubert in the present volume. Aubert mentions the connection between the first foundation and the Ferrer case, but does not provide any details.

24 Luis Simarro, *El proceso Ferrer y la opinión europea*, Madrid 1910. The book is listed by library catalogues in Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, etc.

25 M. H. MacInerny, *Ferrer the anarchist. The facts of his life and trial*, Melbourne [1910?]. Bibliographical reference: <http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/2466133>, consulted 6 December 2016.

26 Reprint available: *Juicio ordinario seguido ante los tribunales militares en plaza de Barcelona contra Francisco Ferrer Guardia*, Palma de Mallorca 1977.

27 See archives of the *Grande Loge de France* (GLDF), “Russian Archives”, Fonds 93, Opus 1, Boite 66. Wolfgang Schmale would like to thank the GLDF and especially Mr. François Rognon, who cordially welcomed him in the Freemasonic archives and helped him with orientation.

Its famous origin and sense for historicity<sup>28</sup>, its conscience of having a mission beyond France, its growing role in French political affairs, especially in the 1930s, its huge membership (as many as 180,000 at times), its role of providing a focal point for political exiles from several European countries made it unique in comparison to all other leagues. This must be kept in mind when attempting a European history of human rights leagues up to World War II.

And such a history, in fact, still remains to be written, even though Naquet begins his subchapter on the creation of the FIDH with an optimistic statement by referring to Victor Basch, a key figure of the LDH and of French civil society, and the pre-1914 situation:

The period before 1914 is characterised by the emergence of sister associations of the French League in many countries. The conflict revived the idea of founding an ‘International of Human Rights’ in a polycentric universe: the humanitarian territory is brimming with networks rooted in an ever more internationalised civil society.<sup>29</sup>

The present volume represents merely a further step in this research direction, nothing more. The “ever more internationalised civil society” is, until now, not a fact but a question to be answered by future investigations. International research is already focused on the French LDH, and it is often French scholars who investigate the history of other leagues (see the contributions by Paul Aubert on the Spanish League, by Emmanuel Naquet on the German *Bund Neues Vaterland*, and by Eric Vial on the Italian LIDU)<sup>30</sup>; but by no means exclusively, as the present volume shows.

Among the many books dealing with human rights leagues, Emmanuel Naquet’s history of the French LDH from its beginnings in 1898 to the French defeat in 1940 is an outstanding study and can be taken as a model. Christopher Treiblmayr is currently writing a history of the Austrian League. We need more such monographs, however, as it will otherwise continue to be difficult to answer the question whether or not an internationalised civil society was developing in the interwar and post-World War II period.

In both periods, all leagues were characterised by ideological frictions between leading members, not all were unequivocal enemies of anti-Semitism, and the general divergence of political interests at the national as well as at the European and international level occasionally sparked conflicts between the leagues. It is probable that the internationalisation of civil society was considerably advanced on the eve of World War I, but the Great War broke these dynamics. The interwar period saw many initiatives that strove to re-establish the pre-war level, but the times were not right – and the same holds true for the relaunch after 1945.

28 See Naquet, *Pour l’Humanité*, Introduction.

29 Naquet, *Pour l’Humanité*, 303: “L’avant 1914 est caractérisé par l’émergence dans nombre de pays d’associations sœurs de la Ligue française. Le conflit réactualise l’idée de fonder une ‘Internationale des droits de l’Homme’ dans un univers polycentrique: le territoire humanitaire est débordé par les réseaux qui plongent dans une société civile toujours plus internationalisée.”

30 A research overview is provided in Schmale / Treiblmayr, *Human Rights Leagues*.

This is the first time that a dozen European leagues, the FIDH and the Turkish İHD are collectively examined in the same volume. In addition, some colleagues provided us with information on several leagues that still await more in-depth research: Armenia, Czechoslovakia, England, Hungary, Portugal, and Russia. Stilyan Deyanov, in his article on the Romanian League, touches on the Bulgarian League as well.<sup>31</sup> The table in the appendix also lists some basic information on all interwar leagues we have been able to identify so far.

As a guideline for this volume, we used affiliation to the FIDH. It therefore also includes the Turkish *İnsan Hakları Derneği* (İHD) (in English: Human Rights Association) examined by Osman İşçi and affiliated with the FIDH. For the first time ever, Osman İşçi provides an outline of the civic engagement for human rights in post-World War II Turkey. Founded in 1986, İHD proves to be the human rights organisation with the longest tradition in Turkey so far, and it is deeply concerned about the authoritarian developments under President Erdoğan's administration. Despite the analogies İşçi identifies, however, İHD is not a human rights league in the strict sense. It is representative of those human rights organisations which, while members of the FIDH, have no immediate links to the human rights leagues that were founded in the tradition of the French mother league since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The admission of İHD into the international umbrella organisation of leagues thus constitutes proof of the more global orientation of the FIDH starting in the 1980s and mentioned by Gilles Manceron and Florence Bellivier in their contributions. From the 1980s onward, it increasingly detached itself from its close links with the French League, which had been a constitutive element of the association since its foundation. This was accompanied by an expansion in the number of member organisations; currently its membership spans 184 human rights organisations in 112 countries.<sup>32</sup> While the International League in New York seems to have more or less ceased operations in the 1980s, the FIDH was able to stand its ground in the process of differentiation within the civil society sphere that began in the 1970s. The media presence of the FIDH and of the various human rights leagues that still exist is obviously not as prominent as, for example, that of Amnesty International. The current and historical role of the leagues as protagonists of "international governance" in the implementation of human rights should not be underestimated, however – and not only because of their nearly 120-year tradition. The present volume aims to contribute to the study of these historical traditions.

31 Deyanov is currently conducting research on both leagues.

32 See <https://www.fidh.org/fr/qui-sommes-nous/le-mouvement-mondial-des-droits-humains/>, consulted 6 December 2016.

## APPENDIX

Human Rights Leagues in the Interwar Period,  
Part of the *Ligue internationale des droits de l'homme* (LIDH)  
or *Fédération internationale des droits de l'homme* (FIDH)<sup>33</sup>

Sources (unless otherwise indicated): *Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine* (BDIC), Paris-Nanterre, and “Les Cahiers des droits de l’homme”, periodical of the French *Ligue des droits de l’homme* (LDH) and of the *Ligue internationale des droits de l’homme* (LIDH) (1920/1922–1940). These sources list the names of persons mostly in a French spelling, which differs from that in the original language.

The appendix assembles basic information on human rights leagues during the interwar period. Leagues discussed in detail in the present volume are in most cases only listed in alphabetical order with reference to their year of establishment as well as to the respective contribution and its author.

### 1. Albanian League

Established in 1923? This league is mentioned as such at the LIDH congress 1923, Paris, see *Cahiers des droits de l’homme*, 1923.

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/58, portfolio Albanian League.

This portfolio contains an inventory of documents concerning 1922–1928 and listing 28 numbers. These documents, with the exception of an address list, do not figure in the portfolio. It contains a letter dated 20 October 1939 and addressed to Émile Kahn. The letter is anonymous but signed by “un groupe d’Albanais”. A document valid for 1928 states Tirana as the registered office, but the Albanian League’s president Bahri Omari was an emigrant in Paris. Listed as “correspondent”: Madame de Villa, Paris.

Useful information concerning persons such as Bahri Omari can be found in: Ștefan Popescu, L’Albanie dans la politique étrangère de la France (1919–juin 1940), in: *Bulletin de l’Institut Pierre Renouvin* 41/2015, no. 1, 121–125.

33 As mentioned above, both names were used during the interwar period. Wolfgang Schmale would like to thank the *Fondation Maison des Sciences de l’Homme* for a grant in October and November 2016, which enabled him to conduct research on the history of human rights leagues in various Parisian archives. The complete results will be published separately, but it seemed useful to the authors to establish this overview of the interwar leagues and publish it here in this volume.

## 2. Argentinian League

Established in ?

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/58, portfolio Argentinian League. Contains one copy of “Informativo Semanal de la Liga Argentina por los derechos del Hombre” (“Nº.-20 (51), Lunes 13 de Junio de 1938 Año II”). Members of the bureau: President Dr. Mario Bravo, Secretary Dr. Arturo Frondizi (Buenos Aires).

## 3. Armenian League

Established in 1922? in Paris. This league is mentioned at the LIDH congress in 1922 with Alexandre Khatissian as representative, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1922.

Khatissian was the first Foreign Minister and the second Prime Minister of the first Armenian Democratic Republic. After the occupation of Armenia by Ataturk Turkey and the Russian Red Army in 1920, he was in exile in France. There is no direct connection between this Armenian League and the Armenian Civil Society Institute established in 1998, although the latter is a member of FIDH.<sup>34</sup>

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/58, portfolio Armenian League.

Letter by Khatissian, delegate to LDH or LIDH, dated 22 December 1932, reporting that the Armenian League numbers 32 members.

The violation of human rights of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and in Turkey was an issue for the French LDH and has been discussed by Naquet and other authors in their studies on the LDH.

## 4. Austrian League

Established in 1926, but contacts with LDH/LIDH as early as 1923 through Rudolf Goldscheid.

See contribution by Christopher Treiblmayr.

## 5. Belgian League

Established in 1901, dissolved in World War I, re-established in 1923.

See contribution by David Morelli. Additional information on the Belgian League during the interwar period is to be found in BDIC, F delta res 0798/58, portfolio Belgian League.

34 Information kindly provided by Artak Kirakosyan, Chairman of the Board, Civil Society Institute, Yerevan. Email to Christopher Treiblmayr, 17 February 2014.

## 6. Bulgarian League

Established in 1922.

See Stilyan Deyanov, *La Ligue bulgare à travers les archives de la Ligue française*, in: Grégory Cingal / Sonia Combe (eds.), *Retour de Moscou. Les archives de la Ligue des droits de l'homme 1898–1940*, Paris 2004, 71–82.

## 7. Chinese League

Established in ?

Present at the first LIDH congress, represented by Mademoiselle Tcheng<sup>35</sup>, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1922.

## 8. Czechoslovakian League

Established in 1926.<sup>36</sup>

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/60, portfolio Czechoslovakian League. Contains N° 1 of the journal “Menschenrechte. Organ der Liga für Menschenrechte in der Tschechoslowakischen Republick [sic!]” (Prague, January 1934, in German. There must also have been a Czech edition of this league journal).

## 9. Danish League

Established in ?

This league is mentioned at the LIDH congress in 1922, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1922.

## 10. Danzig League

Established in ?

This league is first mentioned as attending the meeting of the LIDH Council in Paris on 30 May 1925, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1925, 351. For 1926, the *Cahiers*, 185, list a Dr. Nichbenstein as representative of the Danzig League. It is also mentioned in 1928 and 1929 (*Cahiers*, 1928, 1929).

<sup>35</sup> Naquet, *Pour l'Humanité*, 304, gives Ho Lien Tchen.

<sup>36</sup> Information kindly provided by Zuzana Candigliota, Brno. Workshop at the University of Vienna, 24 May 2014.

### 11. Egyptian League

Established in ?

This league seems to have been active only in Parisian exile.

See F delta res 0798/58, portfolio Egyptian League. A document (24 February 1930) lists as secretary general Mr. K. Boubli (Paris), as secretary Tewfik Salib, as treasurer El Sayed Abou-Bakr Ratib (Paris).

### 12. English League

An English league is mentioned as such, represented by Mr. Cox and Mr. Haskins, at the LIDH congress in 1923 (Paris), see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1923. Until 1929, Mrs. Bethell, Paris, is listed as representative. Further correspondence shows that this league was never established as an organisation that was a member of LIDH.

It seems that the National Council of Civil Liberties (NCCL) and the Union of Democratic Control (UDC) in particular had close relations to LDH and LIDH.

### 13. French League

Established in 1898.

See the contributions by William D. Irvine, Gilles Manceron and Emmanuel Naquet.

### 14. Georgian League

Established in 1923? This league is first mentioned as being present at the LIDH congress in 1923, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1923.

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/58, portfolio Georgian League. This league seems to have been active in Parisian exile. Datiko Sharashidze was its secretary and delegate to LIDH.

### 15. German League

Established in 1914 as *Bund Neues Vaterland*.

See contributions by Emmanuel Naquet (*Bund Neues Vaterland*) and Lora Wildenthal (German League for Human Rights).

## 16. Greek League

Established in 1918.

See contribution by Michalis Moraitidis. In BDIC, F delta res 0798/58, there is a portfolio Greek League, but it does not provide any information beyond that given by Moraitidis.

## 17. Haitian League

Established in 1924, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1924.

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/58, portfolio Haitian League. This league was active in Port-au-Prince. On 14 November 1929, the bureau was composed of: President L. C. Lherisson, ancien sénateur Port-au-Prince; Vice-President Dr. H. Brigord; Secretary Generals W. Bellegarde and G. H. Jacob; Treasurer André Faubert, ancien consul d'Haïti à Port-au-Prince.

## 18. Hungarian League

Established in 1923, present in 1923 at the LIDH congress, mentioned as Hungarian League.

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/58, portfolio Hungarian League. This portfolio contains an inventory of documents concerning 1927–1930 listing 42 numbers, and a second for 1930 listing six numbers. These documents do not figure in the portfolio. N° 1 in the first list mentions a letter concerning the theft of 700 documents of the Hungarian League. The registered office was settled in Boulogne s/Seine. Members of the central committee were (no date indicated): Ernest Bóta, Alexandre Balogh, Adolphe Loffler, Nuitray Kloman, Jean Szucs, Alex Karolyi, Emeric Horvath. Delegates to LIDH: Ernest Bóta, Adolphe Loffler, Alexandre Balogh.

Among the first presidents was Imre Veér, a left-wing politician and controversial figure of the Hungarian emigration. In the interwar period, the League's prime concern was to support Hungarian political refugees in obtaining visas or permits to stay in France.<sup>37</sup>

## 19. Italian League

Established in 1922 in French exile.

See contribution by Eric Vial.

<sup>37</sup> Information kindly provided by Balázs Abloncy, who is conducting research on the Hungarian League.

### 20. *Ligue internationale des droits de l'homme*

Established in 1922, Paris, also called *Fédération internationale des droits de l'homme*.

See contribution by Gilles Manceron.

### 21. Luxembourgish League

Established in 1923.

See contribution by Paul Fonck.

### 22. Norwegian League

Established in ?

This league is mentioned as present at the first LIDH congress in 1922 with Mr. Robert Lange as representative, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1922. BDIC, F delta res 0798/60 contains a portfolio Norwegian League, but it remains unclear whether the only document in it, a letter written by a lawyer to Victor Basch regarding the Trotsky affair, is connected to a Norwegian league.

### 23. Palestinian League

The LIDH congress 1922 debated the proposition by some Zionists living in Paris to establish a Palestinian league; the congress refused because it should find its members among Jews, Christians and Arabs [sic!], see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1922. A Palestinian league (Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem) appears later in LIDH correspondence, but is affiliated with the National Council for Civil Liberties.

### 24. Polish League

Established in 1921 in Warsaw.

See contribution by Izabela Mrzyglód. Additional material see BDIC, F delta res 0798/60, portfolio Polish League. In 1936, the Polish League maintained an office or section in Paris with Dr. Adam Stein (*Faculté de Médecine*, Paris) as secretary. In 1937, it had 14 members in Paris, with some of these being French (naturalised?) citizens. Central committee: President Herman Liebermann (ancien député polonais, member of *Exécutif de l'Internationale Ouvrière Socialiste*), Secretary General Thadée Oppman (docteur en droit, French citizen), Vice-President Mme Docteur Wanda Causse (médecin, French citizen), Vice-President

François Sobecki, Treasurer Mme Irène Domanski-Dubois (docteur ès-Sciences, French citizen).

### 25. Portuguese League

Established in 1920 or 1921.<sup>38</sup>

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/60, portfolio Portuguese League. Active in Lisbon. The portfolio reveals no special interest. This league was represented at the LIDH congress in 1922 by Mr. Fabra Ribas, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1922.

### 26. Rumanian League

Established in 1923 in Bucharest.

See contribution by Stilyan Deyanov.

### 27. Russian League

Established provisionally in Paris in 1922. This league is mentioned at the LIDH congress in 1922 with Mr. Minor as representative, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1922. The central committee was elected in 1924, see *Cahiers*, 1924.

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/60, portfolio Russian League. Contains an inventory for 1917–1928 with 90 numbers, and a second one for 1929–1930 with six numbers. The documents are not in the portfolio. Leading figures were Nicolai Avxentieff, Jacob L. Rubinstein, Boris Mirkin-Getzevich, et al.

There seems to have been a strong Menshevik influence on this league.<sup>39</sup>

### 28. Spanish League

Established in 1922 (two precursors: 1909; 1913–1922).

Active in Spain (Madrid and Barcelona) and in French exile.

See contribution by Paul Aubert.

38 According to the information kindly provided by the *Liga Portuguesa dos Direitos Humanos – CIVITAS* for the workshop at Vienna University in May 2014, it was established in 1921 by Freemasons with links to the republican and socialist political spectrum. In cooperation with our research team, Manuel Malheiros is the head of a working group carrying out research on the Portuguese League's history.

39 Mantas Viselga, Erasmus trainee from the University of Vilnius, carried out research on this league under the editors' supervision.

### 29. Swedish League

Established in ?

This league is mentioned at the LIDH congress in 1922, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1922.

### 30. Swiss League

Established in 1928, but contacts with LDH/LIDH as early as 1922.

It was present at the LIDH congress in 1922, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1922.

See contribution by Doris Leuenberger and Patrick Herzig.

### 31. United States League

Established in ?

Mrs. Loeventhal-Mardfin (the spelling varies in the *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*) is mentioned as representative of the U.S. League. It was probably not a league in the strict sense of LIDH, but there was a strong intent on the part of LDH to establish such a league. Mrs. Loeventhal-Mardfin seems to have attempted to do so.

### 32. Yugoslavian League

Established in ?

This league is mentioned in 1927, see *Cahiers des droits de l'homme*, 1927, 234.

See BDIC, F delta res 0798/60, portfolio Yugoslavian League. Names given for March 1933: President Svetozar Pribitchevitch, Secretary Vladimir Raditch (journaliste), Treasurer Charles Valenzak (négociant), to convoke: Pribitchevitch, Dr. Vorkapitch.

