



KOFF Roundtable: Rising Authoritarianism - Collective Strategies to Strengthen Human Rights

Wednesday, 3 December 2025 | 13:45 – 16:00 CET, followed by an apéro | PROGR, Atelier 368, Bern

Invitation

In recent years, authoritarian policies and practices are on the rise in many regions, restricting fundamental freedoms and undermining human rights at home and abroad. States' non-adherence to international law has become more frequent, weakening the rules-based multilateral system. At the same time, massive and abrupt cuts to foreign aid budgets – in particular in the US under President Trump - are placing millions of lives and the protection of human rights at risk across the globe, appearing to be yet the most consequential escalation of a broader trend to reduce foreign aid. These massive budget cuts coupled with the lack of political engagement and withdrawal of the US and other governments from institutions created to promote peace and human rights worldwide have created a political vacuum at the multilateral level and reduced the financial and human resources needed to uphold peace and human rights globally.

In an increasing number of contexts, civil society faces shrinking space, with repression of dissenting voices, including human rights defenders, journalists, and students, the curtailing or blatantly abusing of human rights of women, LGBTIQ+ community, and immigrants, or the antidemocratic, anti-rights crackdown in every aspect of life. Authoritarian leaders increasingly learn from and collaborate with each other, further fuelling authoritarianism worldwide. Simultaneously, movements across borders can learn from each other as well in how to best counter rising authoritarianism.

The rise of authoritarianism poses deep challenges to democratic societies and a risk for sustainable peace more broadly. Against this backdrop, key questions emerge:

- How can human rights be protected and guaranteed for everyone in a context of rising authoritarianism and shrinking civil space?
- What bilateral and multilateral avenues remain for democratic states, including Switzerland, to effectively strengthen human rights abroad?
- What strategies in collaboration with civil society and other actors could states pursue, gathering forces and using synergies, to counter these trends?

We invite you to join this KOFF roundtable organized in collaboration with Amnesty International Switzerland on “Rising Authoritarianism: Collective strategies to strengthen human rights” to jointly reflect on these questions.

To set the ground for the discussions in groups to identify possible collective strategies, we're looking forward to hearing first-hand insights from our distinguished speakers:

- **Amanda Klasing, Director of Government Relations and Advocacy, Amnesty International USA**
- **Michael Meier, Head a.i. Human Rights Section, Swiss Mission in Geneva, FDFA**

Please register by 30 November 2025 here.