



Statement of the Austrian League for Human Rights

„The ECHR must remain in place – this is non-negotiable! “

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is the backbone of human rights protection in Europe – and therefore in Austria. Recently, there have been increasing calls in politics to restrict the powers of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), to weaken its authority through interpretations, or even to question it fundamentally. This is not only worrying, but also jeopardizes fundamental achievements in the rule of law and individual protection against state arbitrariness.

The ECHR guarantees fundamental rights such as the right to life, the prohibition of torture, freedom of expression and assembly, and protection against discrimination – rights to which every individual is entitled. In Austria, the ECHR has strengthened the protection of personality rights and freedom of expression and media, and has successfully combated discrimination against minorities, illegitimate children, LGBTIQ+ people and in access to asylum procedures. The right to a fair trial and the protection of privacy and property are also guaranteed by the Convention.

A key feature of the ECHR is its character as a *"living instrument"*. This means that it can be interpreted in line with social developments and current challenges. It is precisely this dynamism that makes it an effective instrument in the 21st century – whether in relation to digital surveillance, climate issues or the protection of vulnerable groups. Among other things, the ECHR also plays an important role in protecting women from violence, and decisions by the European Court of Human Rights have helped to strengthen women's rights and oblige states to combat gender-based violence. Through its case law, the ECtHR is helping to ensure that human rights are and remain a living reality for everyone living in Europe.

As a signatory to the ECHR, Austria has not only benefited from this legal development, but also has a responsibility to support it. The erosion or relativisation of the ECHR – whether through political campaigns or legal restrictions – represents a step backwards to a time when human rights were meaningless.

The fact is that the independence and authority of the ECtHR are the guarantee of our democratic constitutional order. Anyone who questions the ECHR also questions the foundations of our liberal constitutional state.

The Austrian League for Human Rights therefore calls on all political leaders to fully commit to the ECHR and the work of the ECtHR. Human rights are non-negotiable.