



# **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BULGARIA STRATEGY 2024-2027**

Agreed on [Day Month Year]

## **PREAMBLE**

### **VISION**

The vision of Amnesty International Bulgaria (hereafter “AIB”) is of Bulgaria, in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

### **MISSION**

AIB’s mission is to prevent and end grave human rights abuses in Bulgaria. In pursuit of this mission, AIB provides education and training on human rights; raises awareness in Bulgaria on issues related to human rights; advocates for adopting good practices related to human rights in Bulgaria; and builds a sustainable movement of Amnesty International in Bulgaria.

### **VALUES**

AIB forms a vibrant community of human rights defenders in Bulgaria with the principles of effective action for the individual victim, global coverage, the universality and indivisibility of human rights, impartiality and independence, transparency and personal responsibility, and democracy and mutual respect.

## **HUMAN RIGHTS PRIORITIES**

### **CIVIC SPACE AND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST**

Bulgaria is highly affected by the general trend of shrinking civic space observed in Europe. Civil society organisations in the country are targeted by smear campaigns by both media

and political actors, access to funding is limited and legislative proposals restricting the freedom of association are frequently made. Meanwhile, protests are commonly organised and carried out. However, their legitimacy is often challenged in the public domain due to the lack of monitoring practices and understanding of the scope of a peaceful assembly and its permissible forms of expression.

**Strategic Goal: Safeguarding the rights to assembly and association.**

1. **Work Stream A:** Developing a protest monitoring network.
2. **Work Stream B:** Responding to violations observed during protests.
3. **Work Stream C:** Advocating against legislative initiatives to restrict assembly and association rights.

## **GENDER EQUALITY AND COMBATING INTERSECTIONAL DISCRIMINATION**

Gender-based violence is among the most pressing issues undermining the efforts towards achieving gender equality in the country. AIB expects backlash against the proposal for a European Union Directive to combat violence against women and domestic violence as it is closely linked to the Istanbul Convention, proclaimed incompatible with the Bulgarian Constitution in 2018. In the current state of affairs, both the Istanbul Convention and the term “gender” are used for smear campaigns against civil society organisations and activists working for gender equality and women’s rights, as well as against adopting and implementing policies addressing those issues.

In addition, the challenges connected to gender equality are intersected by other forms of discrimination based on ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, refugee or asylum status, economic and social status, and other characteristics.

**Strategic Goal: Mainstreaming gender equality and adopting adequate measures against intersectional discrimination.**

1. **Work Stream A:** Introducing amendments to the Penalty Code to criminalise gender-based violence.
2. **Work Stream B:** Raising awareness about terminology related to gender and gender-based violence and GBV as a human rights concern.
3. **Work Stream C:** Advocating for adopting an intersectional approach to discrimination in state policies.

## **THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS**

During the next strategic period, AIB will continue its work on the rights of refugees,

asylum seekers and migrants. It is a topic often mobilised around elections focusing on securitisation and border protection rather than human rights. Taking into consideration the limited capacity to act on individual cases, the efforts of AIB will be concentrated on monitoring the general situation for asylum seekers and migrants in the country, advocating for their full enjoyment of access to the territory of the country, against push-backs and violence as well as raising awareness and educating on the topic to facilitate access to social, economic and cultural rights often limited due to discrimination.

**Strategic Goal: The rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in the country are fully protected and fulfilled by the state and understood by the public.**

- 1. Work Stream A:** Proactively addressing misinformation and disinformation narratives targeting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, as well as the negative stereotypes and dehumanisation sprawling from those narratives.
- 2. Work Stream B:** Monitoring and responding to violations of the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.
- 3. Work Stream C:** Advocating against legislation restricting the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

## **EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY PRIORITIES**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION**

Human Rights Education (HRE) is the main instrument of AIB, since the creation of the initiative in Bulgaria. AIB's Education Strategy will be developed to map existing HRE efforts in Bulgaria and evaluate how AIB's educational resources should be further developed to fill in any gaps in the country.

**Strategic goal: To become the leading voice and provider of human rights education in Bulgaria.**

- 1. Work Stream A:** Educating high school and university students. The formal education in Bulgaria does not cover topics related to human rights to an extent that students could have a clear understanding of human rights issues, as well as social and political sensitivity. Regular school visits, presentations and other HRE activities based on non-formal education methods are crucial. The creation of Amnesty groups is an important method too.
- 2. Work Stream B:** Translating the Online Courses at Amnesty's Academy. The translated courses from Amnesty's Human Rights Academy were the first online self-paced human rights courses available in Bulgarian. This online curriculum needs to be enriched.

3. **Work Stream C:** Training of professionals. Although there are educational programmes on HRE for different professionals in Bulgaria, most of them are sporadic or project-based. As AIB, we aim to have different systematic programmes for public sector professionals. Our target groups are teachers, and municipal and state employees, working directly with people on a daily basis.

## **ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNING**

AIB's Human Rights Strategy will outline how AIB conducts advocacy and campaigning on its human rights priorities. AIB uses Amnesty's analysis in coordination with the International Secretariat to influence and press governmental institutions, companies and decision-makers in Bulgaria to do the right thing. Through petitions, letters and protests, campaigners press for action from the people and institutions who can make change happen.

**Strategic goal: To position AIB as a reliable, resourceful and action-driven advocacy and campaigning organisation in Bulgaria.**

1. **Work Stream A:** Translating and distributing Amnesty-developed resources.
2. **Work Stream B:** Participating in government and civic working groups.
3. **Work Stream C:** Engaging in public consultations and petitions.
4. **Work Stream D:** Developing working relationships with decision-makers.
5. **Work Stream E:** Supporting global Amnesty efforts and campaigns.

## **ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES**

### **SUSTAINABILITY**

AIB needs to strike the right balance between being an organization with a clear administrative and procedural structure from the top down and an organic movement of people which supports its goal from the bottom up. Both those modalities need to create an environment where the organization becomes sustainable and resilient.

**Strategic Goal: Ensure that AIB moves into being a sustainable organisation, aligned to Amnesty's governance and operational model, as well as local organisational modalities.**

1. **Work Stream A:** Diversifying the sources of funding, including exploring and utilising the full potential of Amnesty's Resource Allocation Mechanism and other Amnesty funding options, individual giving in Bulgaria, European Union grants, national

funding, funding from other governments, and funding from grant organisations, when appropriate.

- 2. Work Stream B:** Embodying the One Amnesty approach, whereby we solidify our substantive and administrative cooperation with Amnesty's European Regional Office and the Human Rights Education team as well as on bilateral and multilateral basis with Amnesty's national entities during formal and informal forums and meetings.
- 3. Work Stream C:** Fostering various partnerships with entities at the institutional, NGO and academic levels while coordinating with Amnesty's International Secretariat to avoid duplication or conflicting mandates.
- 4. Work Stream D:** Participating in national or multinational projects as part of larger consortiums, including participation from other Amnesty entities.

## **MOVEMENT BUILDING**

Focusing on movement building is paramount for AIB as it enables the organisation to extend the reach and impact of its human rights advocacy. By nurturing a strong and interconnected network of activists, supporters, and volunteers, we can amplify its messages, mobilise collective action, and drive meaningful change.

Moreover, a robust and interconnected movement strengthens the organisation's resilience, adaptability, and sustainability in the face of complex challenges, enabling it to be an enduring force in fighting for a more just and equitable world.

**Strategic Goal: Expand the organisation's grassroots presence and engagement in Bulgaria, building a robust and interconnected human rights movement to drive impactful change in the country.**

- 1. Work Stream A:** Increasing the number of active supporters and activists in Bulgaria through targeted outreach campaigns, engaging events, and strategic partnerships, fostering a solid and diverse human rights movement in the country.
- 2. Work Stream B:** Meaningfully engaging with internationally registered activists from Bulgaria.
- 3. Work Stream C:** Implementing a comprehensive membership growth strategy to increase AIB's member base.

## **GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS**

AIB will strive to make a clear distinction between governance and operations, as per Amnesty standards, while making sure that the two functions develop a healthy

relationship. Both the governance and operations will follow the best practices from Amnesty entities across the movement.

**Strategic Goal: Create a clear, healthy, and balanced internal division of responsibilities, including in the context of governance and operations.**

- 1. Work Stream A:** Providing constant capacity building in mission-critical areas, including but not limited to project management, communications and budgeting.
- 2. Work Stream B:** Creating a set of sound, easy-to-understand and implementable policies and procedures, including but not limited to operational plans, human resources, international information and knowledge management systems, etc.
- 3. Work Stream C:** Setting up rigorous and competitive talent acquisition processes which attract and nurture the best talent in the human rights sphere in Bulgaria.

## **PRESENCE AND VISIBILITY**

Focusing on presence and visibility is paramount for AIB as it effectively strengthens the organisation's ability to advocate for human rights and drive positive change. A prominent and visible presence would enable us to capture public attention, raise awareness about pressing human rights issues, and mobilise widespread support for our campaigns. By maintaining a visible profile in various media channels and public spaces, the organisation can amplify its messages and reach a broader audience, expanding the impact of its advocacy efforts. Moreover, a strong presence bolsters the credibility and authority of the organisation, making it a trusted voice in the fight against human rights abuses.

**Strategic Goal: Significantly increase Amnesty International's presence and visibility in Bulgaria, becoming a prominent and recognised voice in the country's public discourse on human rights issues.**

- 1. Work Stream 1:** Increasing the organisation's social media reach by consistently producing compelling and shareable content, fostering online communities of advocates, and leveraging innovative digital strategies to amplify human rights messages and inspire action.
- 2. Work Stream 2:** Enhance AIB's media presence and coverage by increasing positive media mentions and features across various platforms. This ensures widespread visibility and accurate representation of human rights issues and the organisation's advocacy efforts.
- 3. Work Stream 3:** Organising and participating in protests and effectively mobilising supporters to uphold human rights in alignment with the organisation's mission.