

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Invitation to the AI · SES · EH · Rule of Law Meet Up

By *Andras Kovaloczy*

My name is Andras and I was born in Budapest, but I moved to Amsterdam in 2017 August to study at the PPLE (Politics, Psychology, Law and Economics) College of the University of Amsterdam. I have always been interested in politics and I have found worrisome the legal and political developments in Hungary since the landslide victory of Viktor Orbán in 2010. In Amsterdam I encountered with many inspiring people from all over the world, motivating people from countries with many problems, who did not give up fighting for their values and beliefs. My perspective started to shift from seeing myself primarily as a victim of the Hungarian illiberal, national-conservative regime, to a responsible and privileged citizen who can do something against the developments if he disagrees with the government. I believe that we should try to understand the processes in our world and if disagreeing with something be brave enough to criticize it.

I was really happy when I heard that Amnesty Netherlands initiated a project regarding the backsliding of rule of law in Hungary and Poland, and I am even more glad that I have the opportunity to help this project as a volunteer. I think that while in one side of the world, such as in Hong Kong, there are people who are willing to sacrifice their lives for democracy and individual liberties, many citizens who are lucky enough to live in established liberal democracies do not value these benefits. I understand that the concept of rule of law or liberal democracy can be abstract and hard to grasp, therefore it is important that NGOs, such as Amnesty International and universities are trying to explain these concepts from a more pragmatic, everyday approach: to explain why the rule of law and individual liberties are beneficial for an average citizen.

Of course, there are countries where the situation is much worse than in Hungary or Poland. However, what is special about Hungary and Poland is that both countries are part of the European Union. This means that these states are strongly intertwined with the Western liberal democracies, such as the Netherlands. Moreover, political parties with similar agenda as the Hungarian or Polish governing parties are strengthening in almost all European states. Therefore, I believe that raising awareness and especially getting know what an individual can do to fight against these negative phenomena is crucial regardless whether you are a critical citizen from an illiberal state or an individual from a liberal country who finds worrisome the developments in the eastern EU member states and the strengthening of the right-wing, populist parties in Western-Europe.

Therefore, I encourage everyone interested in the political developments within the EU to attend the Rule of Law – [Meet Up](#) event of Amnesty International, European Horizons and Study Association for European Studies on the 27th of November at the Roeterseiland Campus of the

University of Amsterdam. You will have the opportunity to ask questions from experts from various fields. You are also really welcome to join if you do not understand why the backsliding of rule of law is a crucial issue in Poland and Hungary, or even if you support the right-wing illiberal movements since I believe in open discussion and this event is for sharing experience and creating space for dialogue.

If you want to learn more about the issues in Hungary and Poland or the establishment and operation of illiberal democracies in general, I suggest having a look at Amnesty's strategic studies (<https://www.amnesty.nl/wat-we-doen/themas/mensenrechteneducatie/strategische-verkenningen/will-human-rights-survive-illiberal-democracy>) or the article summaries made during this project. You can read inter alia about the relationship between critical citizens and the illiberal regime by Otto Spijkers or about the lack of effective countermeasures from the European institutions to tackle the backsliding of rule of law by Daniel Hegedus.

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