



Alkarama Charter

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Note: As a Foundation under Swiss law, legally speaking, Alkarama does not have members, unlike an association. The term 'member' should be understood in this document as a generic term referring to the members of the Foundation Board, the Advisory Committee, the Management and the Staff, as well as interns, volunteers or partners as part of the Support Committee. These bodies are defined in the statutes of the Foundation.

Introduction

Alkarama's vision, values, and principles present at the creation of the Foundation have been refined and matured over the years.

This Charter aims to lay a formal framework that applies to all members of the Foundation and establishes a line of ethical conduct for the daily work.

1. History of the Foundation or the Desire to Restore Dignity to All

Founded in 2004 as an association, Alkarama was working to help victims of torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions in the Arab world.

In 2007, the Founders decided, in the interests of transparency and more rigorous management, to transform Alkarama into a Swiss Foundation, and thus put the organisation under the supervision of the Swiss Federal Supervisory Board for Foundations.

The Founders chose the name "Alkarama", which means "dignity", recalling the universal scope of this concept, which also found a strong echo in the region. One verse of the Qur'an mentions "ولقد كرّمنا بني آدم - and we have honoured all children of Adam." The Founders wished to stress that the organisation they were founding would work to restore dignity (honour) to all human beings (all sons of Adam).

2. Vision, Mission and Values

2.1. Alkarama's Vision

"An Arab world where all people live in dignity, free and protected by the rule of law"

Our vision is of an Arab world where everyone can demand respect for all his/her rights, without fearing for his/her life, liberty or physical integrity. A world where the rights of all people living under the jurisdiction of a State are effectively protected by law and where leaders are accountable to their people, respect their domestic laws and the international human rights treaties they have ratified.

By "**Arab World**", we refer to a geopolitical entity, namely the Arab League's Members States. With this qualification, Alkarama recognises and respects the diversity of these countries' societies, be it ethnic, cultural or religious.

In our conception, "**to live in dignity**" means that every human being deserves unconditional respect, inherent to the human condition in the spirit of Article I of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

By "**free and protected**", we hold that all individuals should have the right to enjoy the fundamental freedoms outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, freedoms which should be guaranteed by law and protected by the country's leaders.

Finally, the "**rule of law**" refers to a power structure characterised by a government freely elected by its citizens, the principles of separation of the executive, legislative and judicial powers and of equality of all before the law, and where leaders are accountable to their people of the responsibilities vested in them. This power structure must also ensure compliance with domestic laws by ensuring their compatibility with the country's international obligations, in particular those related to human rights.

2.2. Alkarama's Mission

Alkarama is an NGO defending the victims of human rights violations in the Arab world – most notably violations of the right to life, to physical and mental integrity and to Civil and Political Rights – by using in priority international law mechanisms. Alkarama also helps to promote a culture of human rights in the Arab world.

Recognising the indivisibility of human rights, Alkarama has nevertheless given priority to the defence of people subjected or at risk of summary execution, torture, arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance, as Alkarama regards these violations of the right to life, physical integrity and civil and political rights as very serious violations that are unfortunately still too common in this region.

To end these violations, Alkarama cooperates with local and national civil society actors, international organisations for the promotion and protection of human rights, as well as governments and other entities likely to act on the human rights situation.

By engaging international mechanisms, we offer support and a last resort to the victims of these human rights violations, so that they achieve respect for their rights against the failure or inefficiency of their country's justice system.

We are also working for a strong international system of human rights protection, which reinforces the regional, national and local protection systems. In particular, we contribute to fill the information gaps, and to increase the attention of international human rights protection mechanisms on human rights violations taking place in the Arab World. Alkarama encourages States to strengthen their national laws to defend and promote human rights.

Finally, Alkarama contributes to the promotion of the "culture" of human rights, by ensuring that the various groups that make up the civil society in these countries are familiar with the concept of human rights and are mobilising around it, know their rights and claim them, and feel protected by law.

Through our projects, we provide these actors with the necessary tools so that they can assert their rights both nationally and internationally.

2.3. Alkarama's Values :

❖ **Dignity:** *Respect is owed to every human being (simply because one is human).*

In practice

- Dignity with which we treat the victims of violations that appeal to us, striving to ensure the best conditions for processing their cases (to act quickly, to listen, be compassionate, etc.).
- Dignity in the treatment of our employees, ensuring them working conditions as good as they possibly can be, and involving them as much as possible in matters concerning the Foundation.
- Dignity in how we address our interlocutors: even those who have committed crimes or violated the rights of another are entitled to respect for *their* dignity.

❖ **Independence:** *Faculty to act freely, without constraint or injunction from a political or ideological entity whatsoever. The refusal of any external directive, wherever it comes from, if in contradiction with the universal principles of human rights or the missions and values of the Foundation.*

In practice

- The Foundation's action plan does not obey to political, ideological or financial pressures. It is prepared by the Management, after an effective and detailed consultation with the Staff and the Advisory Committee, and on the basis of an objective study of the realities and human rights issues in the countries. The strategy is implemented after approval by the Council.
 - The Foundation refuses any financing with conditions that go against our values or the interests of the victims, or which come from governments or entities that commit serious human rights violations, or which are directly or indirectly involved in conflicts in the region.
 - Interaction with all the parties, without exception, which make up civil society.
- ❖ ***Non-discrimination:*** *Equal treatment and consideration of people, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, and religious, political or ideological beliefs.*

In practice

- Equal treatment for all victims of violations who appeal to us, to the extent that these violations fall within our mandate, without further consideration.
 - Refusing all discrimination in the management of our human resources.
- ❖ ***Integrity:*** *Staying true to our principles and values, and being professional.*

In practice:

- To act in the interests of the organisation and of the victims of violations.
 - To act professionally in our everyday work, in applying clearly established principles of good governance.
 - To report on our work and hold ourselves accountable to all relevant stakeholders.
- ❖ ***Justice:*** *Ensuring the rights and duties of everyone equally.*

In practice:

- We demand the application of the law equally to all, in a transparent and egalitarian manner.
 - We support the establishment of the rule of law with an independent judiciary.
- ❖ ***Non-violence:*** *Strategy to fight injustices that rejects the use of violence.*

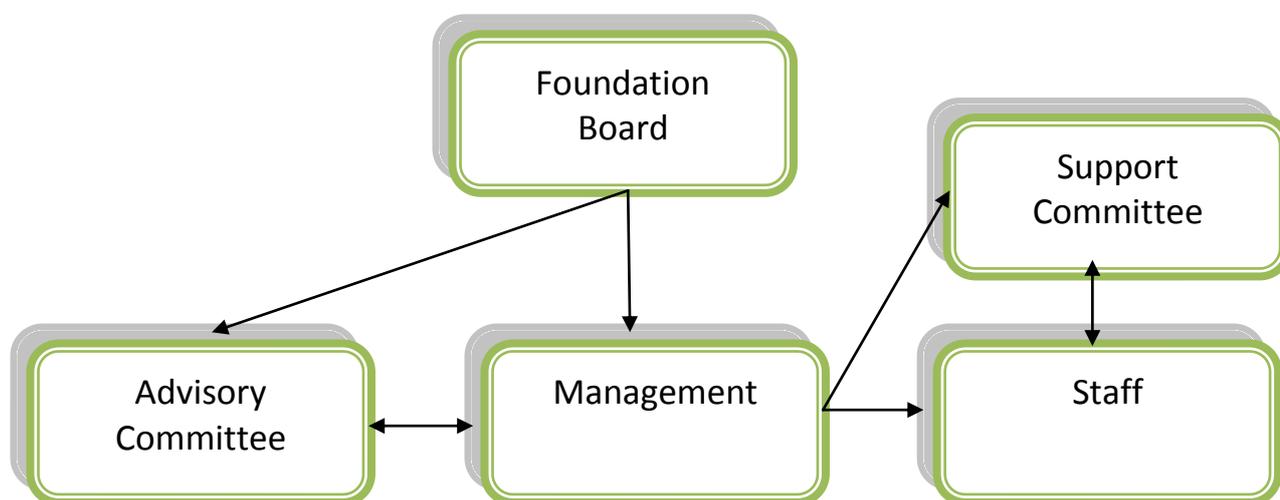
In practice:

- Having chosen the Law to fight injustices, we never advocate the use of violent action.
- As part of our mission, we may defend the rights of people who may have committed acts of violence. In any case, this should not be interpreted as support or legitimisation of such acts, or adherence to the political or ideological orientations of the victims of violations that we defend.

3. Roles and Responsibilities Within the Foundation

3.1. Organisational Structure

The structure of the Foundation, as defined in the Statutes, is described below. The first Board of Trustees was appointed by the Founder, Dr. Abdul Rahman Omair Al Naimi. The responsibilities and roles of the Foundation's bodies are explained in the statutes.



3.2. Individual Members' Responsibilities

3.2.1. Respect of Alkarama's Values and Principles

All members of Alkarama, regardless of their position within the Foundation, commit to work towards the realisation of the Foundation's mission and to respect the values and principles set out in the present Charter. In addition, as human rights defenders, members must comply with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/53/144 of 8 March 1999 on "Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms."

3.2.2. Political Engagement

The commitment to human rights is, seen from a certain angle, also as a political commitment. It is also possible that members of the Foundation have a political engagement. However, it is important to ensure that this commitment is still within clear limits for the organisation to retain its independence and impartiality in order to act in the best interests of the victims.

In this regard, the Foundation sets the following standards:

- Members of the Foundation Board, the Advisory Committee and the Support Committee can have a political commitment, including being elected or appointed to a position in relation to this commitment. They are, however, required to inform the Board of Trustees and the Management of this commitment;
- The members of the Management or Staff may have a political commitment, but they cannot be elected or appointed to a position in relation to this commitment. In addition, the Management must be informed of this commitment;
- The Foundation should never be used or engaged in partisan political agendas.

In any case, the commitment must not be inconsistent with this Charter and must not harm the professionalism, reputation or image of the Foundation. A breach of these principles may result in the obligation to leave the Foundation.

4. How Do We Work?

Alkarama documents cases of violations committed in the Arab world, through regular contact with the victims themselves, their families and relatives, as well as lawyers and the civil society organisations.

Based on the information collected, we engage the various UN human rights protection mechanisms, asking them to intervene with the State concerned to put an end to these violations.

In particular, we send letters of allegation to the UN Special Procedures for individual cases; we submit shadow reports to treaty bodies (the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances) or to the Human Rights Council in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review. All these mechanisms issue recommendations for improving the human rights situation in a given country, recommendations which can then be used by the civil society to call for their implementation.

Alkarama also gives a voice to the victims or their families by sharing their stories as well as the opinions or recommendations issued by the various UN organs on their cases, whether on the Alkarama website or on social networks. This media work often plays an important role in improving the situation of the victims of violations.

5. Governance Principles

To ensure the quality of the Foundation's work, operating and governance principles are implemented in everyday life.

5.1. Guidelines and a Strategy are Set Up, Updated and Communicated

In practice:

- The mission and values of the Foundation are consistent and explicit. They are communicated to all staff and partners.
- An annual (or even multi-year) strategy – based on the human rights situation in the various countries, as well as on the Foundation's opportunities and mandate – is drawn up, approved and implemented.
- Assessments are undertaken to assess the changing needs and demands, and the degree of success in achieving the goals we have set.
- Resource management policies are defined, updated and communicated.

5.2. Sincere, Reliable and Available Information

In practice:

- Everyone gets all information relevant to his/her position in an appropriate form; the quality of the information is verified; diffusion is adapted to the required use.

- We inform continuously and with full transparency partners and beneficiaries (victims and their representatives) on the work we do. We do not make their information public without their permission.
- We implement internal communication mechanisms to ensure that members are always aware of the Foundation's work and direction.

5.3. Giving Ourselves the Means to Ensure Quality Work

In practice:

- Opportunities for exchange and reflection among stakeholders are regularly raised.
- Each project or strategy includes the means to achieve it (budget, human resources, financial resources, logistics, and communication).
- A quality policy of human resources management is developed.
- Each staff member is qualified for his position and receives the means to develop his/her competences.
- Work procedures are established, disseminated and regularly updated.

5.4. Transparency and Financial Ethics

❖ Transparency

- We report on our work through our various reports (progress reports to donors, thematic reports, annual reports);
- We report on our main sources of funding.

❖ Ethical Criteria for Funding

- We reject any funding from governments of countries on which we work;
- We reject any funding from other countries that massively violate human rights;
- We take all steps required to ensure that our donors, including natural persons, respect our values and principles;
- We present an annual financial report consistent with the laws and practices, and accompanied by an audit report conducted by an independent qualified public accountant.