



Swedish Doctors for for Human Rights

Human Rights For All

San Giovanni Bianco, Bergamo, 23 March 2015

Dear Dr Ingrid Eckerman,

I thank you kindly for your interest in SWEDHR. I will here answer to your questions posed at info@swedhr.org, and at the same time addressing the issues you took up in a comment to our vice-chairman Prof. Anders Romesljö, which he communicated to me today. For the sake of references, I have included both of your texts at the end of this reply. [1, 2]

I

“Organisationsnummer”, and “organization” or “network”?

In Sweden, the only thing required to legally build up an altruistic organization (*ideella föreningen*) as a *juridisk person*, is the existence of these three items:

1. That it has started by at least three persons
2. A declaration referring name, aims and decision-making process
3. The existence of a board

Having all the three requirements fulfilled, I made a consultation at the Swedish Tax Authority (Skatteverket) where I got the reassurance that we can beyond any doubt call SWEDHR an “organisation” according to the Swedish law. For reference, the name of the officer at Skatteverket who answered thoroughly to our consultations is Alexandra Stamemkovic.

Further, in occasion of an earlier consultation at Skatteverket about “organisationsnummer”, we got the reply (information which was also confirmed in our later talks with Ms Satmemkovic) that an organization regarded as being *ideella föreningen* and having *rättskapacitet* (juridisk person) does not imperatively need an *organisationsnummer*. This would be

an item mainly linked to economic issues, such as the funnelling of members-fees or external contributions, income declaration, tax issues, etc. in a given organization. All which lead me to the next clarification:

II

Swedish Doctors for Human Rights is not only a non-profit organization; it is also an organization that aims to be independent from economic transactions of any sort. Also, we are devoted solely to international issues in the human rights front. At difference with other organizations of this type in Sweden, SWEDHR a) do not administrate funds of any kind, b) it do not hold neither asks economic sponsoring from any governmental, corporative or private institution; c) it do not collect fees (*meddlemsavgift*) from its supporters; d) it do not campaign on economic-related issues associated with our HR endeavours.

We also believe that abstaining from the aforementioned possibility of external contributions is one way of maintaining absolute independence and credibility regarding unbiased reporting of HR issues.

On the other hand, our international activity is based through pleas in social media, press releases and publications on-line, such as our Research&Reports, all of them free of cost, and free of charge for the readers. However, we might consider filing an application for organization's number – even if it is optional in our case – provided it would add a useful formality.

III

SWEDHR's organizational committee, adopted prior the election of the board and chairmanships basic bylaws referring our structure and decision-making. An addendum to the bylaws regulating the levels "active members" (the Assembly) as separated from "supporting members" has been during these days distributed for discussion at the board. After this discussion is completed, anytime during this week, we will publish the bylaws in the website Swedhr.org [3]. There will be succinctly indicated what SWEDHR expects from its members and supporters. We will also add a brief "historical background" of our organization, which colleagues discussed the original initiative, where, when it started, etc.

In the information on SWEDHR that Prof. Anders Romelsjö posted in Jinge.se it is clearly stated that we are a novel organization. We are nevertheless in franc process of consolidation and we hope to soon reach the

number of 30 members. We have though the minimum number of membership required by the Swedish law to function as independent organization with legal capacity.

IV

Your suggestion that our organization would have better been derived, linked, or initiated by a Swedish medical association (läkarförbundet, etc.) it is a sound idea, however it is not congruent with what SWEDHR is in reality. The main reason being that there is more than *läkare*-category represented in SWEDHR. For instance, there are also Ph.D.'s (*disputerade*, as we say in Sweden) in the fields of immunology, clinical epidemiology, psychiatric epidemiology, together with odontology doctors and MD's with multiple specializations.

In sum, **SWEDHR is not an “organization of physicians”, neither represents all doctors in Sweden** (see disclaimer in item VI below).

A source of confounding in viewing our organization may reside in the common use in Sweden of the title doctor, which amidst the not informed public some times it is wrongly applied to solely physicians (MD's). For in strictly juridical meaning, the title doctor (doktor) in Sweden is reserved to those that have received a PhD in medicine (med doktor), or in other sciences (fil doktor) or even juridical disciplines (Jur doktor). While according to custom, physicians are too titled as to doctors.

In what SWEDHR is concerned, we use the term “doctor” both according to the Swedish juridical and common praxis, and according to the international denomination of “Doctors”, which includes MD as well as *disputerade* PhD's. We summarize in our presentation and in the Manifest: [4]

"SWEDHR is a team formed with the participation of a number of Swedish professors, PhD's, MD's, and university researchers in the medical sciences and health-related disciplines."

V

Further, on the name of our organization.

The use of English in the registered name:

We have chosen to refer to our organization with the *English* denomination, “Swedish doctors for human rights – SWEDHR”, because our endeavour is

implemented in the international front of human rights. We are Sweden-based organization but (so far) none of our HR commitments deals with Swedish domestic issues as such.

Issues of translation:

“Swedish doctors for human rights” is not the same that “Svenska läkare för mänskliga rättigheter”. In its turn, the translation into English of “Svenska läkare för mänskliga rättigheter” it would have been “Swedish *Physicians* for Human Rights” (i.e. as the American organization “Physicians for Human Rights”).

In conclusion, the use of the term “Doctors” in our organization’s name is intentional and has a distinct, *sine qua non* significance. SWEDHR’s referring to “doctors” and not to “physicians” is not fortuitous. It instead properly characterizes both our actual member-composition and our aimed recruiting catch-category, which are “Doctors” in general, and not solely “physicians”.

All this is informed in our foundation Manifest, published at our web site, and also distributed in international social media by the organization WikiLeaks in an especial link twittered in WikiLeaks official Twitter.

VI

You will also find in the same Manifest, our clear DISCLAIMER stating that the participation of among other physician-doctors (internationally called also MD) together with researchers, PhDs etc. is done in private basis and not representing the professional organizations that they otherwise also belong to.

"SWEDHR is a team formed with the participation of a number of Swedish professors, PhDs, medical doctors and university researchers in the medical sciences and health-related disciplines. This participation is purely voluntary and made on a private basis. SWEDHR statements represent solely the members of this organization, not all Swedish doctors or any other institution or professional/academic association that the participants in SWEDHR are associated with. "

Only for the sake of making my argument as clear as possible, I would like to present here this rhetoric illustration:

It would be the same of the case of any Swedish *läkare* being also member of Amnesty International. He/she is there as a single individual, not as a member of *Läkarförbundet*. Would the Swedish section of Amnesty

International have asked for help at *Läkarförbundet* to start its HR activities in Sweden, based in that very many of Amnesty members or potential supporters are *läkare*? Or asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, because many of their HR items touch upon Sweden's official stance? Of course they wouldn't. Despite the fact that the Swedish section of Amnesty has indulged in quite peculiar stances, such as those we criticize in the aforementioned SWEDHR Manifest. [3]

We believe that a politically and ideologically independent Human-Rights organization is highly needed in helping to restore Sweden's honourable tradition in the defence of civil liberties, particularly on health-related issues in populations victimized by wars of aggression.

FINALLY:

I hope that this will at least in part clarify the issues you raised. And we look forward to see you some day participating in the activities of our human rights organization. If you would have further items, please do not hesitate to contact us again. Prof. Anders Romelsjö is directly reached at anders.romelsjo@ki.se, and for my part at fdenoli@gmail.com/

With best regards

Marcello Ferrada de Noli, professor em., med dr.
Chairman, SWEDHR.

References

[1]. Dr Ingrid Eckerman's communication to Prof. Anders Romelsjö:

"Detta tycks vara en alldeles färsk organisation. Jag kan inte påminna mig något upprop i *Läkartidningen*, vilket brukar vara det "normala" sättet att starta en ny läkarorganisation. Den verkar inte vara ansluten till *Läkarförbundet* eller *Läkaresällskapet*, vilket minskar dess förtroende som läkarorganisation. Hur många medlemmar har den? Hur tänker man sig rekrytera medlemmar? Stadgar? Eller är det bara ett nätverk, en grupp – inte en organisation? En grupp dit man bjuds in, inte öppen för alla?

En grupp som yttrar sig internationellt och kallar sig "Swedish doctors for ..." bör ha förankring i läkarkåren på ena eller andra sättet."

[2]. Dr Ingrid Eckerman's communication to info@swedhr.org

Hej!

Saknar på hemsidan dels datum då föreningen grundades, dels stadgar. Bra om årsmötesprotokoll etc läggs ut också. Liksom alla kontaktuppgifter, som organisationsnummer och officiell adress. Hur betar man sig om man vill bli medlem?

För jag antar att SWEDHR är en organisation/förening? Annars ska det väl kallas nätverk???

Hälsningar / Regards
Ingrid

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[3]. *Swedish Doctors for Human Rights*. Website, <http://swedhr.org>

[4] Manifest of Swedish Doctors for Human Rights.
<http://swedhr.org/swedhr-manifest/>