

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION AGAINST CLANDESTINE INFLUENCE AND UNDISCLOSED POWER

A Framework for Transparency, Accountability, and Democratic Integrity

Proclaimed and Authored by

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PREAMBLE

Whereas transparency, accountability, and the rule of law constitute the foundation of legitimate governance and democratic stability;

Whereas the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights affirms the right to freedom of expression and access to information, and the United Nations Convention against Corruption calls upon States to prevent, detect, and address corruption through transparency and institutional integrity;

Whereas no private allegiance, concealed obligation, or undisclosed network of influence should supersede the duties owed to law, public office, or the public interest;

Whereas clandestine influence—defined as the coordinated and undisclosed exercise of power by individuals or groups in a manner that evades accountability—undermines equality before the law, distorts decision-making, and erodes public trust;

Whereas freedom of association is a fundamental right, but may be subject to lawful limitations where necessary to protect public order, democratic integrity, and the rights of others;

Therefore, this Declaration establishes principles to safeguard open societies from the harmful effects of undisclosed and unaccountable power.

SECTION I — DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Declaration:

1. Clandestine Organization

Any structured association that (a) requires binding secrecy regarding membership, activities, or decision-making; and (b) engages in or seeks to influence public, economic, or institutional outcomes; and (c) operates in a manner that materially obscures accountability.

2. Material Influence

Any direct or indirect capacity to affect decisions, policies, outcomes, or institutional actions, whether through formal authority or informal coordination.

3. Public Fiduciary

Any individual entrusted with public authority, including but not limited to elected officials, judges, regulators, and public administrators.

4. Undisclosed Allegiance

Any commitment, obligation, or association that is intentionally concealed and may conflict with duties owed to the public interest.

Article 1 — Mandatory Disclosure for Public Fiduciaries

All individuals serving in positions of public trust shall disclose any affiliation with organizations that require secrecy, where such affiliations may present a conflict of interest or influence public decision-making. Failure to disclose such affiliations shall constitute a breach of public trust and may result in removal from office, civil liability, and disqualification from holding public office, as defined by applicable law.

Article 2 — Supremacy of Public Law

No oath, pledge, or private agreement shall be valid or enforceable where it (a) requires the concealment of unlawful acts; (b) obstructs justice; or (c) compels actions that violate public law or ethical obligations.

Article 3 — Prohibition of Clandestine Collusion

Any coordinated effort by individuals or groups to manipulate markets, influence public contracts, interfere with judicial processes, or distort governance through undisclosed means shall be subject to investigation and prosecution under applicable anti-corruption, anti-collusion, and related laws. Sustained secrecy in such contexts may be considered evidence of intent to evade lawful oversight.

Article 4 — Protection of Whistleblowers

No non-disclosure agreement, confidentiality clause, or oath of secrecy shall be enforceable to the extent that it prevents the reporting of criminal activity, corruption, or threats to democratic institutions. Individuals who disclose such information in the public interest shall be protected against retaliation in accordance with recognized international principles of whistleblower protection.

Article 5 — Transparency of Beneficial Influence

Any individual or entity exercising material influence over public decision-making shall be subject to appropriate disclosure requirements. Undisclosed coordination, concealed direction, or hidden influence over institutional processes shall constitute a violation of transparency principles.

Article 6 — Safeguarding Judicial Integrity

Judicial and quasi-judicial actors shall maintain strict impartiality. Any real or perceived conflict of interest arising from undisclosed affiliations or shared associations with parties before them shall require recusal in accordance with established standards of judicial conduct.

Article 7 — Lawful Oversight and Audit Authority

States retain the authority to investigate or audit organizations where credible evidence suggests undisclosed or improper influence over public institutions, provided that such actions are (a) lawful; (b) proportionate; (c) subject to due process; and (d) governed by independent oversight mechanisms.

Article 8 — Prohibition of Retaliatory Networks

Any coordinated effort to retaliate against individuals through (a) professional exclusion, (b) economic coercion, (c) reputational harm, or (d) social blacklisting for refusing participation in, exposing, or opposing misconduct shall be considered a violation of civil and legal protections and subject to sanction under applicable law.

SECTION II — IMPLEMENTATION PRINCIPLES

This Declaration shall be implemented in accordance with the principles of:

- Proportionality
- Due process
- Institutional independence
- Respect for fundamental human rights and lawful association

CONCLUSION

This Declaration affirms a fundamental principle:

Legitimate power must be visible to those it affects.

Where power is exercised through undisclosed allegiances, democratic consent is undermined and accountability is compromised. By aligning freedom of association with transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, this framework establishes that:

No individual, organization, or network may exercise influence over public systems without being subject to scrutiny and responsibility.

ADOPTION CLAUSE

This Declaration is issued as a normative framework for voluntary adoption by states, institutions, and civil society organizations committed to strengthening transparency, accountability, and democratic integrity.

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