










Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2023/2118(INI)	Procedure completed
Human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter ? annual report 2023		
Subject 6.10.09 Human rights situation in the world		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs		31/03/2023
		 SÁNCHEZ AMOR Nacho	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 LÓPEZ GIL Leopoldo	
		 YENBOU Salima	
		 HAUTALA Heidi	
		 KARSKI Karol	
		 URBÁN CRESPO Miguel	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		10/10/2023
		 KOKALARI Arba	

Key events			
12/07/2023	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/11/2023	Vote in committee		
08/12/2023	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0424/2023	Summary
27/02/2024	Debate in Parliament		

28/02/2024	Results of vote in Parliament		
28/02/2024	Decision by Parliament	T9-0106/2024	Summary

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2023/2118(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Annual report
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/9/12600

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report		PE751.673	10/07/2023	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE753.674	25/09/2023	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE753.666	25/09/2023	EP	
Specific opinion	FEMM	PE754.846	07/11/2023	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0424/2023	08/12/2023	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0106/2024	28/02/2024	EP	Summary

Human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter ? annual report 2023

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the report by Nacho SÁNCHEZ AMOR (S&D, ES) on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Unions policy on the matter - annual report 2023.

Addressing global trends and major challenges

The report reaffirmed the duty of the EU and its Member States to promote and protect democracy, the rule of law and the universality and inalienability of human rights around the world in a resolute, coherent and consistent manner.

Members stressed that the EU must be fully prepared to counter the rise and malign influence of authoritarianism, illiberalism and extremism, as well as the threats to human rights protection and the increasing attacks on the universality of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and international humanitarian law. They called for the EU and its Member States to lead by example and strictly uphold human rights, ensure an enabling environment for their civil society and to address any negative trends in this field.

The report denounced the tailor-made narratives that authoritarian and illiberal regimes are developing to attack the universality of human rights and the rule of law. It warned that the above-mentioned narratives are being spread by these regimes in international forums such as the United Nations Human Rights Council. The EU and its Member States should counter these hostile narratives.

Overall, Members condemn the increasing trend of violations of human rights and democratic principles and values across the world, such as deepening levels of social, economic and political inequality, the reversal of rights, notably for women, the persistent and systematic exclusion of and discrimination against entire social groups, executions, extrajudicial killings, torture, gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions, clampdowns on marginalised and vulnerable individual and groups, civil society, political opponents and ethnic and religious minorities, slavery and forced labour, censorship and threats to independent media and journalists.

Responding to universal human rights and democracy challenges

The report makes a series of recommendations concerning: (i) upholding international human rights and humanitarian law, (ii) progress towards the universal abolition of the death penalty, (iii) the right to freedom of expression, media freedom, academic freedom and the right to information, (iv) the right to equality and non-discrimination, (v) freedom of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, (vi) the right to public participation, (vii) cultural rights, (viii) the rights of women and LGBTQ+ persons, (ix) the rights of minorities, migrants and refugees, (x) the rights of the child, (xi) the rights of elderly people and persons with disabilities, (xii) the right to food, water and sanitation and to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; (xiii) human rights in the face of threats posed by artificial intelligence (AI).

Strengthening the EUs toolbox for the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy around the world

In particular, Members called for:

- a strengthening of the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy to maximise synergies and complementarity between human rights and democracy at local, national and global levels. Member States should take ownership of the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy and report publicly on their actions under this strategic document;
- the strengthening of the role of the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights and as well as its visibility with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights by the Union in the dialogue with third countries and like-minded partners;
- better support for civil society organisations, democracy activists and media organisations, in particular through the European Democracy Fund;
- greater transparency regarding human rights-related provisions in financing agreements under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument Global Europe and the human rights and democracy thematic programme and a clarification of the mechanism and criteria for the suspension of such agreements in the event of a breach of human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law;
- the consistent application of human rights clauses to all the Union's international agreements with third countries, including sectoral and investment agreements;
- an enhanced role for human rights dialogues within the EU's human rights toolbox; these dialogues should address the situation of all human rights and democracy with the countries concerned;
- more dynamic and coherent use of the EU's global human rights sanctions regime; Members reiterated their call for the introduction of qualified majority voting for decisions relating to this regime;
- increased efforts to raise awareness of the weakening of democratic culture in third countries;
- the complete revision of the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, with a view to addressing the emerging threats and challenges and ensuring their applicability and effectiveness in the protection of human rights defenders globally;
- stepping up efforts to reform the justice system, combat impunity and improve transparency and anti-corruption institutions in third countries.

Parliament stressed the need for the EU and its Member States to act in a united manner with a single voice and effectively in tackling global human rights and democracy challenges in multilateral forums.

Human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter ? annual report 2023

The European Parliament adopted by 377 votes to 90, with 68 abstentions, a resolution on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter annual report 2023.

Parliament stressed the duty of the EU and its Member States to promote and protect democracy and the rule of law, as well as the universality and inalienability of human rights in the world.

Addressing global trends and major challenges

Deploping the attitude of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes that undermine multilateral institutions, in particular the UN Human Rights Council, Parliament called on the Council and Member States to work with their democratic allies committed to the same principles to encourage the reform of multilateral institutions, with the aim of making them more resilient to the deleterious influence of authoritarian regimes.

Members stressed that the EU must be fully prepared to counter the rise and malign influence of authoritarianism, illiberalism and extremism, as well as the threats to human rights protection and the increasing attacks on the universality of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and international humanitarian law.

Overall, Members condemn the increasing trend of violations of human rights and democratic principles and values across the world, such as deepening levels of social, economic and political inequality, the reversal of rights, notably for women, the persistent and systematic exclusion of and discrimination against entire social groups, executions, extrajudicial killings, torture, gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions, clampdowns on marginalised and vulnerable individual and groups, civil society, political opponents and ethnic and religious minorities, slavery and forced labour, censorship and threats to independent media and journalists.

Members called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and called on the Union and its Member States to grant UNRWA support with the proper funding to continue and to improve its life-saving humanitarian work.

Responding to universal human rights and democracy challenges

The resolution makes a series of recommendations concerning: (i) upholding international human rights and humanitarian law, (ii) progress towards the universal abolition of the death penalty, (iii) the right to freedom of expression, media freedom, academic freedom and the right to information, (iv) the right to equality and non-discrimination, (v) freedom of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, (vi) the right to public participation, (vii) cultural rights, (viii) the rights of women and LGBTIQ+ persons, (ix) the rights of minorities, migrants and refugees, (x) the rights of the child, (xi) the rights of elderly people and persons with disabilities, (xii) the right to food, water and sanitation and to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; (xiii) human rights in the face of threats posed by artificial intelligence (AI).

Strengthening the EU's toolbox for the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy around the world

In particular, Members called for:

- a strengthening of the EU Action Plan for Human Rights and Democracy to maximise synergies and complementarity between human rights and democracy at local, national and global levels;

- the strengthening of the role of the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights and as well as its visibility with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights by the Union in the dialogue with third countries and like-minded partners;
- better support for civil society organisations, democracy activists and media organisations, in particular through the European Democracy Fund;
- greater transparency regarding human rights-related provisions in financing agreements under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument Global Europe and the human rights and democracy thematic programme and a clarification of the mechanism and criteria for the suspension of such agreements in the event of a breach of human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law;
- the consistent application of human rights clauses to all the Union's international agreements with third countries, including sectoral and investment agreements;
- an enhanced role for human rights dialogues within the EU's human rights toolbox; these dialogues should address the situation of all human rights and democracy with the countries concerned;
- more dynamic and coherent use of the EU's global human rights sanctions regime; Members reiterated their call for the introduction of qualified majority voting for decisions relating to this regime;
- increased efforts to raise awareness of the weakening of democratic culture in third countries;
- the complete revision of the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and the development of strong and effective national guidelines and laws on human rights defenders, which will serve as a model for other countries to follow;
- stepping up efforts to reform the justice system, combat impunity and improve transparency and anti-corruption institutions in third countries.

EU actions in multilateral fora

Reaffirming the need for the EU and its Member States to act in a united manner with a single voice in the United Nations and other multilateral fora, Parliament called on the EU and its Member States to advocate a separate and permanent seat for the EU in multilateral fora, including the UN Security Council, in addition to the existing seat allocated to EU Member States.

The resolution underlined the need for the EU and its Member States to act effectively and in unison to address global human rights and democracy issues in multilateral fora. It stressed the important role of the EU's public and cultural diplomacy and called on the Commission, the EEAS and the Member States to adopt a genuine Team Europe strategy involving regular collaboration with Parliament and involving it meaningfully at every meeting.