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DRAFT REPORT

on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy
on the matter – annual report 2026
(2026/2059(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

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CONTENTS

	Page
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION.....	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	9
ANNEX: DECLARATION OF INPUT	10

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

**on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter – annual report 2026
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The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
 - having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights,
 - having regard to Articles 2, 3, 8, 21, 23 and 36 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU),
 - having regard to Articles 17 and 207 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant United Nations human rights treaties and instruments,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A10-0000/2026),
- A. whereas human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights are founding values of the European Union, as set out in Article 2 TEU; whereas the protection and defence of human rights and democracy is at the core of the EU's external action, as set out in Article 21 TEU;
- B. whereas the defence of human rights is not only a legal and moral obligation, but a strategic interest of the EU, since democracies governed by the rule of law are its most reliable partners;
- C. whereas the world continues to undergo a sustained authoritarian resurgence, with autocratic and illiberal regimes increasingly coordinating – politically, economically, militarily and technologically – to entrench their power, shield one another from accountability, and actively contest the universality of human rights and the legitimacy of the institutions that uphold them;
- D. whereas a universal, rules-based multilateral order, with the UN and its human rights architecture at its core, remains indispensable; whereas that architecture is simultaneously under political attack and chronically underfunded, leaving a vacuum that authoritarian states are attempting to exploit to rewrite human rights norms from within;
- E. whereas an abrupt and radical contraction in international funding for human rights protection, democracy support and independent media has put human rights defenders (HRDs), forced the closure of vital programmes, and compounded the authoritarian resurgence; whereas the EU has thereby become one of the last major actors in this

field;

- F. whereas women and girls continue to face systemic discrimination, exclusion and violence, including gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence used as a weapon of war, and whereas their rights are among the first casualties of authoritarian rule;
- G. whereas children continue to be exposed to the sharpest edge of armed conflict;
- H. whereas HRDs face escalating threats, judicial harassment, arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances and killings, and whereas impunity for these crimes has increasingly become the rule rather than the exception;
- I. whereas international justice mechanisms, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) in particular, are faced with an unprecedented campaign of political pressure, threats and coercive measures, including extraterritorial sanctions imposed against their officials;
- J. whereas freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief is a fundamental right underpinning many other rights;
- K. whereas the universal abolition of the death penalty remains a core objective of the EU's human rights policy; whereas although a record number of states have now abolished it in law or in practice, a small number of states are responsible for a sharply rising number of executions;
- L. whereas a free, independent and pluralistic press is indispensable to democratic accountability;
- M. whereas the uncontrolled development of increasingly advanced artificial intelligence (AI) systems could threaten democracy, fundamental rights and, ultimately, humanity itself;
- N. whereas the EU has set global standards through the Artificial Intelligence Act¹ and by ratifying the first legally binding international treaty on AI, the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence, which has not yet entered into force;

Reaffirming the EU's unwavering commitment to democracy and human rights

1. Reaffirms the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, and affirms that respect for human dignity, democracy, fundamental freedoms, equality, the rule of law and international law must remain at the heart of all dimensions of the EU's external action, in accordance with Article 21 TEU;
2. Stresses that the effective protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms constitute a strategic interest of the EU; underlines that a values-based foreign policy is essential to the EU's international credibility, security and

¹ Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act) (OJ L, 2024/1689, 12.7.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj>).

geopolitical standing;

Current global challenges to democracy and human rights

Protecting and empowering individuals

3. Condemns the persistent discrimination, exclusion and violence faced by women and girls and by people targeted on the grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity, including gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence; underlines the need to address intersecting forms of discrimination that further increase the vulnerability of those affected;
4. Notes with concern that millions of children remain vulnerable to violence, exploitation, abuse and trafficking, especially in conflict zones, and are also deprived of basic care, education and healthcare;
5. Reiterates its concern over the increasing pressure on and shrinking of civic space, and condemns the extensive authoritarian practices, state-sponsored propaganda and repressive legislation directed against civil society organisations, human rights defenders (HRDs) and political opponents, as well as the lawyers defending them;
6. Notes with concern the increasing threats against and harassment, detentions and killings of HRDs, and the use of repressive legislation to silence and intimidate journalists, religious communities and opposition leaders, as well as the enhanced cooperation among authoritarian regimes to silence them;
7. Expresses deep concern over the increasing numbers of arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances, which constitute grave violations of human rights and are often paired with torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment, and over the lack of accountability of the state and non-state perpetrators responsible;
8. Reaffirms that the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is absolute under international law;
9. Emphasises that severe reductions in international funding for human rights, democracy, independent media and development cooperation have compounded the risks faced by people in vulnerable situations and weakened the institutions established to protect them;
10. Condemns attacks, threats and reprisals against journalists and media workers, and their arbitrary detention, and deplores the persistent impunity for such acts; expresses concern over the fact that expanding digital capabilities are increasingly being used for unlawful surveillance, online harassment and intimidation, undermining journalists' safety and ability to work freely and independently;
11. Reiterates its deep concern over the rise in violations of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and in intolerance, discrimination and violence levelled against people belonging to religious or belief minorities; is alarmed that more than three quarters of the world's population live in countries where this freedom is seriously restricted;

12. Expresses concern over the discrimination, exclusion, hate speech and violence faced by people belonging to national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities;

Democratic resilience

13. Expresses particular concern over the global trend of democratic erosion and the rise of authoritarianism, illiberalism and populism which, through attacks on democratic institutions, independent media and civil society, threaten universal human rights and the rule of law in a growing number of countries; considers this erosion a systemic threat to the international rules-based order, multilateralism and global peace;

Multilateralism

14. Reaffirms that multilateralism and a universal rules-based international order, with the UN at its core, remain indispensable for the protection of human rights and the peaceful and equitable management of global challenges;
15. Expresses deep concern over the attempts to undermine the universality of human rights and independent mandates, the political and financial pressure on international institutions, and the persisting underfunding of the UN human rights pillar; welcomes the EU's active engagement in the UN reform process;
16. Expresses profound alarm at the unprecedented political pressure, threats and coordinated attacks directed against international justice mechanisms, and the ICC in particular; reiterates its unwavering commitment to the fight against impunity and underlines that holding the perpetrators of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity to account is essential to upholding the rules-based order;

New technologies

17. Stresses that the growing use of new technologies, and of AI in particular, poses significant risks to democracy and fundamental rights when weaponised by authoritarian regimes for mass surveillance, cyberattacks and disinformation, as well as through algorithmic bias leading to discrimination;

Recommendations for action: harnessing the EU toolbox and amplifying its potential

Protecting and empowering individuals

18. Calls on the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission to intensify diplomatic efforts and international cooperation towards the abolition of the death penalty and the adoption of a moratorium on all executions;

Democratic resilience

19. Calls for the EU to stand firmly against authoritarianism by taking enhanced diplomatic bilateral, regional and global initiatives in support of political pluralism, independent institutions and the rule of law, using all possible preventive and retaliatory tools at its disposal, including sanctions, and applying common standards in its external human rights policy;

20. Calls on the Member States and other signatories that have not yet done so to ratify the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence, so that it can enter into force;

Multilateralism and international justice

21. Calls for the EU to review and, where necessary, amend the EU Blocking Statute², and to deploy the full range of available instruments – including the Anti-Coercion Instrument³ and sustained diplomatic engagement – to shield the ICC and those cooperating with it from extraterritorial coercive measures; urges all Member States to cooperate fully with the ICC in accordance with their legal obligations and to promote the universality of the Rome Statute;
22. Calls for the EU and its Member States to defend and make full use of the UN human rights machinery – the Human Rights Council, the Universal Periodic Review, the Special Procedures and their independent mandate-holders, the treaty bodies and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – to resist attempts to weaken independent mandates, to protect from reprisals those who cooperate with them, and to ensure their adequate funding;

The EU's human rights toolbox

23. Stresses that the credibility and impact of the EU's human rights policy depend on the coherent and consistent use of its full toolbox, on adequate and protected funding secured within the multiannual financial framework, and on the EU acting as a convener of like-minded partners, since it cannot sustain the global human rights agenda alone;
24. Calls for the extended use of the EU global human rights sanctions regime – EU Magnitsky Act – to sanction individuals who persecute or harass HRDs;
25. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to significantly increase the resources and staffing available to the EU Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU; calls for the EU to build on its leadership in the UN Human Rights Council by continuing to promote freedom of religion or belief-related resolutions;
26. Calls for the EU to strengthen a coordinated 'Team Europe' approach to human rights and democracy support across EU delegations, Member State missions and Parliament, making full use of parliamentary diplomacy and interparliamentary dialogue;

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² Council Regulation (EC) No 2271/96 of 22 November 1996 protecting against the effects of the extra-territorial application of legislation adopted by a third country, and actions based thereon or resulting therefrom (ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/1996/2271/2018-08-07>).

³ Regulation (EU) 2023/2675 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 November 2023 on the protection of the Union and its Member States from economic coercion by third countries (OJ L, 2023/2675, 7.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2675/oj>).

27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Each year, the European Parliament adopts three annual reports on the EU's foreign, security and defence, and human rights policies.

The three reports are on:

- the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy - annual report 2026 (based on the report of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Policy to the European Parliament on the Common Foreign and Security Policy) - competence of the AFET Committee,
- Human Rights and Democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter - annual report 2026 (based on the EU Annual report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World) - competence of the DROI Subcommittee, and
- the implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy - annual report 2026 (based on the report of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Policy to the European Parliament on the Common Foreign and Security Policy) - competence of the SEDE Committee.

These reports monitor and assess the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including the EU policy on Human Rights and the Common Security and Defence Policy. They are a key component of the European Parliament's contribution to EU foreign policy making, most notably in regard to the strengthened right of scrutiny conferred to the European Parliament by the Treaty of Lisbon. It is essential that the European Parliament respond to the annual reports issued by other institutions as soon as they are published.

This report focuses on the most emerging challenges to human rights and democracy, emphasizing the deterioration of human rights worldwide, the rise of authoritarianism and the drastic decrease of international funding in order to address such challenges. The report reaffirms the EU's unwavering commitment to human rights and democracy, and urges for the effective protection and empowerment of the individuals who champion human rights causes. Moreover, it instils the importance of the EU spearheading multilateral engagements and to reinforce democratic resilience. The report further underlines the impact of rising technological capabilities on fundamental rights and identifies potential risks that they pose on human rights. Concluding, the report makes specific recommendations in order to channel the EU's political to human commitments to human rights and democracy into tangible action.

ANNEX: DECLARATION OF INPUT

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that she included in her report input on matters pertaining to the subject of the file that she received, in the preparation of the draft report, from the following interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register¹, or from the following representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies:

1. Interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register
Araminta
Avocats Sans Frontières
Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
CSW
Front Line Defenders
International Centre for Transitional Justice
International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN)
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)
Protection International
2. Representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies
none

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the rapporteur declares that she has submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register (OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_interinst/2021/611/oj).