

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001506/25
to the Commission
Jonas Sjöstedt (The Left)
(11 April 2025)**

Subject: Human rights situation in the Philippines and EU-Philippines free trade agreement negotiations

The Commission announced the resumption of EU-Philippines free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations in March 2024.

Under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's rule, the human rights situation in the Philippines has not significantly improved; drug-related killings have continued, and impunity persists. Political persecution of human rights defenders has increased, with an alarmingly high number of enforced disappearances and targeted fabricated charges related to alleged terrorism financing. In 2023, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights questioned the Philippines' continued trade perks with the EU.

EU-Philippines FTA negotiations have resumed without a new human rights impact assessment (HRIA), despite the previous decision from the European Ombudsman that the Commission's failure to carry out an HRIA, in relation to its negotiation of an FTA with Vietnam, constituted maladministration (1409/2014/MHZ).

1. What is the Commission's response to the human rights situation in the Philippines, taking into account the recent disappearances of multiple human rights defenders and environmental activists?
2. How does the Commission take these concerns, including the decision from the European Ombudsman and human rights organisations, into account with regard to future EU-Philippines FTA negotiations?
3. Why has the Commission not carried out a new HRIA, and what would be required for this to be considered?

Submitted: 11.4.2025

**Answer given by Mr Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(18 June 2025)**

The EU remains concerned about the human rights situation in the Philippines. The European External Action Service and the Commission raise these concerns regularly, both bilaterally and when engaging in multilateral fora such as the United Nations Human Rights Council.

Human rights issues are an integral part of the EU's relations with the Philippines, as set out in the partnership and cooperation agreement (PCA) ⁽¹⁾ and are discussed in detail during the annual meetings of the EU-Philippines Subcommittee on Good Governance, the Rule of Law and Human Rights and in the GSP+ monitoring under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences ⁽²⁾ (GSP).

The Commission finances programmes that strengthen the rule of law by improving access to justice, supporting judicial reforms and enhancing accountability and human rights protection across the country.

The Commission engages with, and welcomes input from, all civil society, including human rights organisations. The EU text proposals ⁽³⁾ include a chapter on trade and sustainable development (TSD), in line with the 2022 Commission TSD communication ⁽⁴⁾, proposing more participation and support for civil society and a stronger focus on implementation and enforcement and cover human rights through the proposed provisions on labour standards and gender equality.

The EU has proposed human rights as an essential element of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by linking to the relevant provisions of the PCA.

In 2022, the Commission published a Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) ⁽⁵⁾, which includes a dedicated section with a human rights impact assessment, and all elements in the SIA are taken into consideration in the text proposals and during the ongoing FTA negotiation.

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents/treaties-agreements/agreement/?id=2011002&DocLanguage=en>.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2012/978/2023-11-28>.

⁽³⁾ <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/09242a36-a438-40fd-a7af-fe32e36cbd0e/library/ad546f8a-b5ba-4a51-ba60-88993dc42d18?p=1>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TEXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022DC0409&qid=1656586727707>.

⁽⁵⁾ <https://circabc.europa.eu/ui/group/09242a36-a438-40fd-a7af-fe32e36cbd0e/library/7ce196ff-3fba-487e-a6ce-1f72e04e40d0/details?download=true>.