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Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas
on behalf of the European Commission
(22.7.2025)

The EU, including through its Delegation in Panama, is monitoring the situation regarding protests against the reform of the social security system, and infringement of trade unionist rights. The EU remains vigilant as regards any negative developments that would impede the National Union of Workers of Construction and Similar Industries (SUNTRACS) or other civil society actors to operate freely.

The EU and its Member States use various instruments to address human rights violations, combining diplomatic and political action. The support and strengthening of civil society actors and organisations remain an EU priority in its relations and cooperation with Panama. The situation of civil society in Panama was discussed during the institutional meetings of the Association Agreement together with all Central American counterparts, notably at the Trade and Sustainable Development Board meeting, which took place in San José (Costa Rica) in the last week of June 2025.

The EU-Central America Association Agreement¹ provides in its political and cooperation parts, useful provisions for cooperation on human rights and commitments to respect them.

The Commission, together with Member States, carefully evaluates the different instruments at its disposal, when it comes to considerations of suspension of the application of parts of the Association Agreement with respect to Panama. Actions should be appropriate and proportionate. The wider population, and particularly vulnerable groups, should not be penalised. For this reason, the EU considers that it is important to continue with the application of the trade part of the Association Agreement. The situation will be kept under continuous scrutiny.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=legissum:4314902>.