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E-002427/2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas
on behalf of the European Commission
(18.8.2025)

The EU is founded on the values of respect for human rights, which also represent a core dimension of its external policy. This also applies to EU relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and its member states¹.

Human rights questions are regularly addressed at all levels, including through Political and Human Rights Dialogues with each GCC country. They were also discussed at the first EU-GCC Summit in Brussels (16 October 2024), where both sides committed to deepening these dialogues as a key element of cooperation².

The EU systematically encourages GCC countries to live up to their international human rights commitments, including by ratifying and implementing key United Nations (UN) treaties, actively supporting the work of the UN Human Rights Office and the UN Special Procedures, fully cooperating with UN human rights mechanisms, and ratifying and implementing International Labour Organisation conventions and recommendations. The EU also offers technical support, expertise and best practices as appropriate.

The regular Human Rights Dialogues between the EU and the GCC countries provide a constructive avenue for frank exchanges, including on individual cases of concern.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights also engages actively with GCC countries on individual cases of political prisoners.

The proposed bilateral Strategic Partnership Agreements with each of the six GCC member states aim to promote EU interests while upholding its core values as a principled and value-based actor on the international stage.

¹ The Kingdom of Bahrain, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Kuwait, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/10/16/first-european-union-gulf-cooperation-council-summit-joint-statement/>.