

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000221/26
to the Commission
Marina Mesure (The Left)
(21 January 2026)**

Subject: Panama: follow-up to infringements of EU-Central America Association Agreement and attacks on trade union freedoms

In May 2025, the issue of suspending the EU-Central America Association Agreement was raised with the Commission due to the ongoing trade union crackdown in Panama, particularly on the SUNTRACS union, following strong protests against Law No 462. This repression directly infringes International Labour Organisation Conventions 87 and 98 and the Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America. In her answer of 22 July 2025, Vice-President/High Representative Kallas stated that the Commission was evaluating the different instruments at its disposal with a view to potential action concerning Panama.

Six months later, not only has there not been a single sanction, but the situation is getting worse. The crackdown on SUNTRACS and workers has ramped up, with at least 17 arbitrary raids and extensive pressure on Panamanian workers since November 2025.

In view of the above:

1. What is the state of play of the Commission's evaluation and what specific measures — in particular as regards the targeted suspension of the agreement — does it now intend to take in light of these repeated infringements?
2. How does it justify its lack of action, given that the facts are established and documented and the agreement provides for sanction mechanisms in the event of serious infringements?

Submitted: 21.1.2026

**Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(5 March 2026)**

The EU, including through its delegation in Panama City, closely monitors political and socioeconomic developments in Panama. The EU engages regularly with the government of Panama to address key issues including human rights, notably through the mechanism of bilateral consultations (second round took place in Brussels on 27 October 2025).

In this regard, information received from independent Panamanian civil society organisations is essential; for this reason, the EU regularly engages in exchanges with Civil Society Organisations, in Panama, across the region, and in Brussels.

The EU-Central America Association Agreement⁽¹⁾ remains a key avenue for promoting political dialogue, trade and cooperation throughout the region.

The EU-Central America Association Agreement includes provisions for cooperation on human rights and commitments to respect them.

The Commission, together with EU Member States, carefully evaluates the different instruments at its disposal, when it comes to considerations of possible suspension of the application of parts of the Association Agreement.

Suspension is a measure of last resort, foreseen under the Agreement only in cases of particularly grave and persistent breaches of human rights, and where other avenues of engagement have failed. Actions should be appropriate and proportional and not lead to additional unnecessary hardships.

The EU will continue to monitor and raise issues on rule of law, human rights, and freedom of association with all its Central America partners including Panama.

There will be further opportunities for engagement on the occasion of the next EU-Central America Association Committee in 2026 and Association Council in 2027.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/factsheet-central-america-association-agreement_en.