

EP: EU Must Be Credible Actor in Global Human Rights Protection

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News

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ISSN: 1862-6947

<https://eucrim.eu>



In its annual report assessing the human rights situation in the world in 2019, adopted in the plenary on 20 January 2020, MEPs express deep concerns about authoritarian regimes around the world having used the pandemic to repress civil society and critical voices. They called that all EU policies with an external dimension should mainstream support of human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the fight against impunity. These policies include development aid, migration, security, the fight against terrorism, women's rights, gender equality, enlargement and trade. The EU is also called on to support the strengthening of democratic institutions and transparent and credible electoral processes worldwide, to foster democratic debate, to fight against inequalities and to ensure the functioning of civil society organisations. In the report, the EP responds to a number of global human rights and democracy challenges, for instance as regards the fight against impunity, human rights defenders and the situation of vulnerable groups.

The EP makes several recommendations on EU action that should be taken at the multilateral level, e.g., systematically introducing human rights clauses in all international agreements. The EU should also develop an explicit strategy to counter increasing state withdrawal and retreat from the international human rights framework.

MEPs push for the new EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime to be implemented urgently (→ <https://eucrim.eu/news/new-eu-sanctioning-regime-human-rights-violations-around-world/>). MEPs stress that this so-called EU-Magnitsky Act is an essential part of the EU's existing human rights and foreign policy toolbox. This sanction mechanism would strengthen the EU's role as a global human rights actor, allowing for targeted sanctions against individuals, and state and non-state actors and other entities responsible for or complicit in serious human rights violations. Acts of systematic corruption related to grave human rights violations should also lead to EU sanctions.

MEP [Isabel Santos](#) (S&D, PT), who prepared the report, [said](#): “As MEPs, it is our duty to speak out, loudly and clearly, when it comes to human rights and the need to protect and recognise all those who work tirelessly and in difficult situations to uphold them. To achieve true credibility as the European Union, it is vital that we act and speak with a strong and unified voice on human rights. We should not fail those who look towards Europe with hope.”

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The project is co-financed by the [Union Anti-Fraud Programme \(UAFP\)](#), managed by the [European Anti-Fraud Office \(OLAF\)](#).



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