Addressing transnational repression of human rights defenders

2025/2048(INI) - 13/11/2025 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 512 votes to 76, with 52 abstentions, a resolution on addressing transnational repression of human rights defenders.

Transnational repression against human rights defenders: growing trends and threats

The resolution defined transnational repression as all attacks, threats, and pressure exerted by states or their proxies against dissidents, journalists, human rights defenders, and diaspora members beyond their borders. These practices include physical methods (assassinations, abductions, violence, forced repatriations), abuses of legal tools (extraditions, red notices, consular pressure), and non-physical techniques, including digital surveillance, intimidation, and blackmail.

Members strongly condemned all these forms of repression, deeming them contrary to human rights and the sovereignty of host states, and insisted on the need for a **common definition** and a **solid legal framework** at multilateral, regional and national levels to combat this phenomenon.

Parliament expressed its concern about **the escalating** transnational repression, which is taking increasingly insidious forms: torture, smear campaigns, asset freezes, extrajudicial killings, cyber threats, and pressure targeting family members. It condemned authoritarian regimes that are increasingly resorting to **transnational digital repression** through the use of artificial intelligence technologies, spyware, and the malicious disclosure of personal data. It also condemned legal and diplomatic pressure -including the use of politically motivated Interpol Red Notices.

The resolution considered transnational repression **a direct threat to the sovereignty and security of states**, requiring a coordinated response at the European Union level. It expressed concern about the shrinking of civic space and measures that silence exiles. It also emphasised that certain groups -particularly women, racial, religious, sexual, and socioeconomic minorities -are disproportionately affected.

Mainstreaming transnational repression in EU policies

Parliament invited the Commission, the Member States and the European External Action Service (EEAS) to:

- systematically address transnational repression in the **human rights clauses** of Union agreements, where appropriate, as well as in human rights dialogues with third countries;

- assist human rights defenders and other targeted individuals through **dedicated programs** enabling them to continue their work in exile while remaining safe from reprisals and attacks;

- integrate transnational repression into the EU action plan for human rights and democracy for the post-2027 period and into the European Union guidelines concerning human rights defenders.

Members stressed the urgent need to close, both at national and EU level, the protection gaps faced by human rights defenders when they are targeted by transnational repression.

Enhance coordinated monitoring and data collection

Parliament called on the EEAS and Member States, in cooperation with relevant institutions such as Europol, to coordinate their efforts and establish **accessible information, data, tracking and reporting mechanisms**, in order to improve the documentation of cases of transnational repression on their territories and facilitate a rapid reaction and investigation where necessary. The Commission is called upon to establish a centralised mapping mechanism to identify, monitor, and assess incidents, and to share alerts of transnational repression targeting human rights defenders within the Union.

Member States are invited to codify transnational repression in their national legislation and to establish national focal points within their governments for potential and actual victims.

Addressing the risks posed by digital technologies

Parliament asked the EU and its Member States to:

- recognise, prevent and combat digital forms of transnational repression and to criminalise foreign intelligence activities targeting dissidents in exile, under the heading of transnational digital repression;

- exercise strict oversight of markets and operations related to spyware and surveillance devices, including by implementing a human rights due diligence obligation;

- put in place easily accessible and secure reporting mechanisms, designed to respect and protect the privacy of users;

- ensure that private actors, particularly in the technology sector, are held accountable for the role they play in the development of transnational digital repression.

Accountability and applying sanctions

The EU is called on to hold states and regimes committing **transnational repression accountable** and to consider imposing targeted sanctions and assist the EU to support victims of transnational repression in seeking redress through strategic litigation before the European Court of Human Rights. Parliament denounced the fact that transnational repression also takes place on EU Member State soil and in some cases with Member State complicity in transnational repression and stressed the need for due diligence in dealings with the governments concerned.

The Commission is urged to proactively engage and further collaborate with Interpol and the UN, including by developing a **common security framework** for transnational repression in order to put an end to the abusive and politically motivated use of red notices, blue notices, diffusions and extradition requests. Parliament called for transnational repression to be included as a sanctionable category under the European Union's Magnitsky Act and to list individuals found to be perpetrators of transnational repression.