

Basic information	
2024/2081(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter – annual report 2024 Subject 6.10.09 Human rights situation in the world	

Key players				
European Parliament	Committee responsible		Rapporteur	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs		WISELER-LIMA Isabel (EPP)	24/07/2024
	Committee for opinion		Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		AL-SAHLANI Abir (Renew)	16/10/2024
European Commission	Commission DG		Commissioner	
	European External Action Service		KALLAS Kaja	

Key events			
Date	Event	Reference	Summary
28/11/2024	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
30/01/2025	Vote in committee		
05/03/2025	Committee report tabled for plenary	A10-0012/2025	Summary
01/04/2025	Debate in Parliament		
02/04/2025	Decision by Parliament	T10-0059/2025	Summary
02/04/2025	Results of vote in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2024/2081(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure

Procedure subtype	Annual report
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	AFET/10/00895

Documentation gateway				
European Parliament				
Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE763.138	17/09/2024	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE765.278	06/11/2024	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE765.279	06/11/2024	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE765.280	06/11/2024	
Committee opinion	FEMM	PE765.160	09/01/2025	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A10-0012/2025	05/03/2025	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T10-0059/2025	02/04/2025	Summary

Meetings with interest representatives published in line with the Rules of Procedure

Rapporteurs, Shadow Rapporteurs and Committee Chairs

Transparency				
Name	Role	Committee	Date	Interest representatives
WISELER-LIMA Isabel	Rapporteur	AFET	04/09/2024	Avocats Sans Frontières Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies Center for Reproductive Rights, Inc. Clean Clothes Campaign / Stichting Schone Kleren Kampagne End Female Genital Mutilation - European Network European Partnership for Democracy Front Line Defenders International Dalit Solidarity Network International Federation for Human Rights International Partnership for Human Rights Protection International Reporters sans frontières Save the Children Europe Race & Equality

Human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter – annual report 2024

2024/2081(INI) - 02/04/2025 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 390 votes to 116, with 126 abstentions, a resolution on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter - Annual Report 2024.

Global Challenges to democracy and human rights

Parliament emphasised the duty of the EU and its Member States to **promote and protect democracy and the universality of human rights worldwide**. It called on the EU and its Member States to lead by example and strictly promote and defend human rights and international justice. Respect for, protection of, and enforcement of human rights and fundamental freedoms must be the **cornerstone of the Union's external policy**.

Denouncing the rise of authoritarianism, totalitarianism and populism, Members condemned in particular the growing trend towards violations of human rights and democratic principles and values in the world (decline in women's rights, torture, repression of civil society, etc.), as well as the shrinking of the space allocated to civil society throughout the world.

Parliament noted with deep concern the ongoing international crisis of accountability and the challenge to the pursuit of **ending impunity** for violations of core norms of international human rights and humanitarian law in conflicts around the world. It underlined the serious consequences of discrediting and attacking the organisations of multilateral forums, such as the UN, which can foster a culture of impunity.

Strengthening the EU Toolbox

Members welcomed the extension of the **European Union Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy** until 2027, with a view to maximising synergies and complementarity between human rights and democracy at local, national, and global levels.

The resolution:

- calls for greater visibility of the role of the **European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for human rights** and requests that the EUSR be provided with additional resources;
- recalls the fundamental role played by the **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)** – Global Europe and calls for the suspension of European Neighbourhood Policy projects that directly or indirectly contribute to human rights violations in third countries;
- reiterates its call for robust human rights clauses in **agreements between the Union and third countries**, with a clear set of criteria and procedures to be followed in the event of violations;
- underlines the need to increase the visibility of the **Union's human rights dialogues**;
- suggests that the **EU Global Sanctions Regime** and other ad hoc sanctions regimes be used more effectively against those responsible for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including senior officials;
- calls on the Commission to continue and expand its democracy support activities by increasing funding for EU bodies and agencies and by directly supporting civil society, given the growing attacks against the rules-based global order by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes;
- stresses the urgent need for a comprehensive review of the EU Guidelines on **Human Rights Defenders**, given the continued shrinking space for civil society and the increasing threats to the work of human rights defenders and CSO members;
- emphasises the important role of civil society and journalists in third countries in monitoring the **fight against impunity and corruption**, and calls on the EU to step up efforts to reform the justice system, combat impunity, and improve transparency and anti-corruption institutions in third countries;
- calls on all Member States to comply fully and unconditionally with **international humanitarian law**, calls for the systematic establishment of humanitarian corridors in war zones and to give high priority to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights in their response to humanitarian and refugee crises. Members deplored the discrimination and violence suffered by women and girls, particularly during conflicts.

EU Actions at the Multilateral Level

Parliament highlighted the particularly important role of the **United Nations** as the primary forum capable of effectively advancing efforts to promote peace and security, sustainable development, and respect for human rights, and reaffirmed that the EU and its Member States must speak with one voice within the United Nations and other multilateral fora.

Member States and partners who share their values are called upon to develop a robust strategy to counter the increasingly frequent attacks on the rules-based global order by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

Members reaffirmed the EU's strong support for the **International Court of Justice** and the International Criminal Court (ICC) as essential, independent, and impartial judicial institutions in a particularly challenging context for international justice. They expressed their deep concern about the sanctions imposed on the ICC, which constitute a serious attack on the international judicial system and called on the Commission to urgently activate the **blocking statute** and on Member States to strengthen their diplomatic action to protect and safeguard the ICC.

Responding to universal human rights and democracy challenges

The resolution makes a series of recommendations regarding: (i) the right to freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; (ii) the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; (iii) the right to food, water, and sanitation; (iv) the rights of the child; (v) the rights of women, refugees, LGBTIQ+ people, and elderly persons; (vi) the right to equality and non-discrimination; (vii) the right to life (towards the universal abolition of the death penalty); (viii) the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief; (ix) the rights of indigenous peoples; (x) the right to public participation; the role of trade as a key instrument for improving the human rights situation in the EU's partner countries; (xi) and, lastly, human rights in the face of threats posed by artificial intelligence (AI).

Lastly, Parliament expressed concern about the threat that **artificial intelligence** (AI) poses to democracy and human rights when it is not duly regulated, stressing the need for oversight, strict transparency, and appropriate safeguards for new and emerging technologies, as well as a human rights-based approach. Members are also concerned about how the internet is being used to restrict political freedom and undermine the integrity of elections.

Human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter – annual report 2024

2024/2081(INI) - 05/03/2025 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the report by Isabel WISELER-LIMA (EPP, LU) on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter - Annual Report 2024.

Global Challenges to democracy and human rights

The report emphasised the duty of the EU and its Member States to promote and **protect democracy and the universality of human rights worldwide**. It called on the EU and its Member States to lead by example and strictly promote and defend human rights and international justice. Respect for, protection of, and enforcement of human rights and fundamental freedoms must be the **cornerstone of the Union's external policy**. Members condemned in particular:

- the **growing trend of violations of human rights** and democratic principles and values worldwide (threats of a rollback of human rights, particularly women's rights, torture, gender-based violence, repression of civil society and marginalised and vulnerable groups, etc.);
- slavery and forced labour, excessive use of violence by public authorities, the instrumentalisation of the judiciary, censorship, and threats to independent media, including threats in the digital sphere such as online surveillance;
- the weakening of the protection of democratic institutions and processes and the **shrinking space for civil society** worldwide.

Members noted with deep concern the ongoing international crisis of accountability and the challenge to the pursuit of **ending impunity** for violations of core norms of international human rights and humanitarian law in conflicts around the world. They underlined the serious consequences of discrediting and attacking the organisations of multilateral forums, such as the UN, which can foster a culture of impunity.

Despite these challenges, the Union recognises the **positive progress** made in human rights, highlighting, in particular, the work of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and human rights defenders.

Strengthening the EU's toolbox

Members welcomed the extension of the **EU action plan on human rights and democracy until 2027**, with a view to maximising the synergies and complementarity between human rights and democracy at local, national and global levels;

The report:

- supports the work of the **European Union Special Representative** (EUSR) for Human Rights, who contributes to the visibility and coherence of the Union's human rights actions in its external relations;
- recalls the fundamental role played by the **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument** (NDICI) - Global Europe, in particular its thematic programme on human rights and democracy;
- reiterates its call for the inclusion of human rights assessments and robust human rights clauses in **agreements between the Union and third countries**, accompanied by a clear set of criteria and procedures to be followed in the event of violations;
- underlines the need to increase the visibility of the Union's human rights dialogues;
- suggests that the **EU Global Sanctions Regime** and other ad hoc sanctions regimes be used more effectively against those responsible for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including senior officials;
- calls on the Commission to continue and expand its **democracy support activities** by increasing funding for EU bodies and agencies and by directly supporting civil society in the current context of heightened global tensions and repression in a growing number of countries;
- stresses the urgent need for a comprehensive review of the EU Guidelines on **Human Rights Defenders**, given the continued shrinking space for civil society and the increasing threats to the work of human rights defenders and CSO members;
- emphasises the important role of civil society and journalists in third countries in monitoring the **fight against impunity and corruption**, and calls on the EU to step up efforts to reform the justice system, combat impunity, and improve transparency and anti-corruption institutions in third countries;
- emphasises the particularly important role of the **United Nations** and reaffirms that the EU and its Member States must speak with one voice within the United Nations and other multilateral fora in order to effectively address global human rights and democracy challenges in multilateral fora;

- calls on Member States and like-minded partners to develop a **robust strategy** to counter the increasingly frequent attacks on the rules-based global order by authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, including through unprovoked and unjustified aggression against peaceful neighbours;

- reaffirms the Union's strong support for the **International Court of Justice and the ICC**;

- calls on all Member States to comply fully and unconditionally with **international humanitarian law**, calls for the systematic establishment of humanitarian corridors in war zones and to give high priority to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights in their response to humanitarian and refugee crises.

Responding to universal human rights and democracy challenges

The report makes a series of recommendations regarding: the right to freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; the right to food, water, and sanitation; the rights of the child; the rights of women, refugees, LGBTQI+ people, and elderly persons; the right to equality and non-discrimination; the right to life (towards the universal abolition of the death penalty); the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief; the rights of indigenous peoples; the right to public participation; the role of trade as a key instrument for improving the human rights situation in the EU's partner countries; and, lastly, human rights in the face of threats posed by artificial intelligence (AI).

Human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter – annual report 2024

2024/2081(INI) - 11/02/2025 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the report by Isabel WISELER-LIMA (EPP, LU) on human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union's policy on the matter – annual report 2024.

Global challenges to democracy and human rights

The report strongly encouraged the EU and its Member States to strive for a continued ambitious commitment to make freedom, democracy and human rights and their protection a central part of all EU policies in a streamlined manner and to enhance the consistency between the EU's internal and external policies in this field, including through all of its international agreements.

Members reiterated that the EU must be fully prepared to counter the rise of authoritarianism, totalitarianism and populism, as well as the increasing violations of the principles of universality of human rights, democracy and international humanitarian law. They condemned the increasing trend of violations and abuses of human rights and democratic principles and values across the world and deplored the weakening of the protection of democratic institutions and processes, and the shrinking space for civil societies around the world.

Strengthening the EU's toolbox for the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy around the world

The report noted with concern the increasing divide worldwide and stressed the shared responsibility of the EU to continue defending democratic values and principles and human rights, international justice, peace and dignity around the world, which are even more important to defend in the current volatile state of global politics.

EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights

While fully supporting the work of the EUSR for Human Rights in contributing to the visibility and coherence of the EU's human rights actions in its external relations, the report called for **greater visibility for the role of the EUSR for Human Rights** as well as his work to be supported with **increased resources** and better coordination with EU delegations around the world. Members also insisted on the need for the EUSR to report back to Parliament regularly.

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe and the human rights and democracy thematic programme

Recalling the fundamental role of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe, including its thematic programme on human rights and democracy, as a flagship EU instrument in promoting and protecting human rights and democracy around the world, Members reiterated the importance of **streamlining a human-rights based approach in the EU's external action instruments**. Furthermore, the report called for a **suspension** of projects that (in)directly contribute to human rights violations in non-EU countries.

EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (GHRSR – EU Magnitsky Act)

Members welcomed the increasing use of the EU GHRSR as a key political tool in the EU's defence of human rights and democracy across the world. However, they regretted that its use has continued to be limited, especially in the current geopolitical landscape. Members demanded that the **fight against terrorism** be at the top of the EU's domestic and foreign affairs agenda.

Team Europe approach

The report stressed the potential for stronger alignment in approaches to human rights protection and promotion between EU institutions, Member States' embassies and EU delegations in non-EU countries. In this respect, the EU and its Member States are called on to intensify their collective efforts to promote the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights and to support democracy worldwide.

Human rights and trade policy

The report stressed the role of trade as a major instrument to promote and improve the human rights situation in the EU's partner countries. In this regard, the Commission is urged to improve coordination between the EU's trade, investment and development policies and prioritise and promote the development of human rights through EU trade policies, including the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus. Robust clauses on human rights should be included in agreements between the EU and non-EU countries.

Human rights and digital technologies

Members are concerned by the threat that AI can pose to democracy and human rights, especially if it is not duly regulated. They highlighted the need for oversight, robust transparency and appropriate safeguards for new and emergent technologies, as well as a human-rights based approach.

While welcoming the adoption of the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, Members are deeply concerned about the harmful consequences of the misuse of AI and deepfakes, particularly for women and children. They also condemned the use of new and emerging technologies, such as facial recognition technology and digital surveillance, as coercive instruments and their use in the increasing harassment, intimidation and persecution of human rights defenders, activists, journalists and lawyers.