



European Union

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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(29 February – 25 March 2016)

Item 4

Statement by

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Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

on behalf of the European Union

Geneva, 15 March 2016

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

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EU Statement

Human Rights situation that require the Council's attention

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union.

The following countries align themselves with this statement: Montenegro and Liechtenstein.

The European Union is highly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide and welcomes this opportunity to discuss some of the human rights situations in various parts of the world that require the Council's attention.

With regard to the situations in the **DPRK, Myanmar/Burma, Syria, Iran, Eritrea and Burundi**, as well as **Ukraine**, we would like to refer to our interventions in the respective interactive dialogues.

The EU is appalled at continual reports of atrocious violations of human rights in **South Sudan**, many of which may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity. The reports of international bodies, such as the AU Commission of Inquiry, UNMISS, the UN Panel of Experts and the OHCHR must be followed up. The EU calls for the Council to establish a Special Rapporteur for South Sudan, and encourages the African Union to rapidly operationalize the establishment of the Hybrid Court, foreseen in the 2015 South Sudan peace agreement.

The EU is still concerned about the human rights situation in **Egypt**. The EU is taking into account the serious challenges faced by the country, in particular the terrible impact of terrorism on the Egyptian population and calls on the government of Egypt to tackle terrorism with full respect international human rights standards and the rule of law. the referral of civilians to military courts, mass trials and the handing down of death sentences are of grave concern, as are disproportionate sentences against demonstrators and activists, and increased pressure – including through travel bans - on journalists, cultural organisations, academia and civil society. The EU is

increasingly concerned by reports of torture, enforced disappearances and poor detention conditions. It also calls for the full respect of fundamental freedoms, enshrined in the Egyptian constitution. It underlines the need for accountability by means of thorough, independent and transparent investigations for all violations.

The EU is deeply concerned about the humanitarian impact of the crisis in **Yemen**. It calls on all parties to fully respect international humanitarian and human rights law and support the national independent Commission of Inquiry. The EU underlines the importance of a UN- facilitated process to bring the conflict to a peaceful end and calls on all parties to genuinely engage in forthcoming political talks.

The EU is concerned about the recent increase in the number of executions in **Saudi Arabia**. The limitations on freedom of expression and the severe punishments against human rights defenders and bloggers are also of concern.

In **China**, the detention of human rights defenders, lawyers and those defending labor rights, and enforced disappearances on foreign soil raise serious questions about China's respect for its international human rights obligations and its stated commitment to upholding the rule of law. The disappearance and detention of five Hong Kong residents, two of whom EU citizens and the public broadcasting of their so-called confessions also raise serious concerns. Individuals detained for seeking to protect the rights of others and for the peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression, including Liu Xiaobo, Ilham Tohti, Xu Zhiyong and Wang Yu, should be released. China should also take into account concerns about the draft foreign NGO law and the recent national security and counter-terrorism legislation. Lastly, the EU urges China to address the root causes of unrest and foster dialogue with different ethnic groups, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The EU deplores the continuing crackdown on civil society by the **Russian Federation**. The implementation of the "foreign agents" and "undesirable organisations" laws is negatively affecting independent civil society. Human rights defenders are being sentenced to long periods in prison, including for peaceful protest. Intimidation and harassment against the opposition and independent media continue. Furthermore, the EU urges the Russian authorities to free the persons abducted from Ukraine and illegally detained in Russia, including Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov and Alexander Kolchenko. The EU urges the Russian Federation to ensure that its normative framework

is in full compliance with its obligations under international law including in relation to the implementation of decisions by international courts.

The EU welcomes the significant progress made by **Uzbekistan** in eradicating forced child labour, and encourages further work on adult forced labour in cooperation with the ILO. We deeply regret that human rights defenders from Uzbekistan continue to risk arrest, and imprisonment, that the issue of ill-treatment and torture remains largely unaddressed and that civil society and the press face severe restrictions. We urge Uzbekistan to move forward with the implementation of its National Action Plan on Human Rights.

We look forward to the implementation of its Human Rights Action Plan by **Turkmenistan**, but remain concerned by reports on torture, by restrictions imposed on political activity, press freedom and civil society space. We strongly encourage further steps to improve prison conditions, to facilitate international access to prisoners, and to provide information on individuals held in incommunicado detention.

Finally, regarding the situation in the **occupied Palestinian territory**, the EU remains gravely concerned at the continuing cycle of violence and loss of human life. The use of administrative detention and the human rights implications of demolitions and confiscations are also of concern. The EU recalls that compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security. The EU calls on all parties to fully cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms.