



**European Union**

**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**29<sup>th</sup> Session**

**(15 June – 3 July 2015)**

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**Item 4**

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**Statement by**

**H.E. Mr Raimonds Jansons**

**Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Latvia**

**on behalf of the European Union**

**Geneva, 24 June 2015**

**- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -**

**UNITED NATIONS  
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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: The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Liechtenstein.

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

With regard to the situations in Belarus, Eritrea and Syria, we would like to refer to our interventions in the respective interactive dialogue. The EU believes that the situation in Belarus requires the Council's continued attention and calls for the extension of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur.

The EU condemns the continuing serious human rights violations and abuses in eastern Ukraine and the further deterioration of the human rights situation in the illegally annexed Crimea, as described in the OHCHR report of 1 June 2015. The ever increasing, heavy toll on the civilian population in the conflict area is of grave concern. The EU calls on all sides of the conflict to ensure respect for international human rights and humanitarian law. It supports the work of the OHCHR in documenting violations and ensuring accountability, including in Crimea and Sevastopol. The EU moreover calls for unimpeded access of the OHCHR to the Crimea Peninsula.

Horrific human rights violations and abuses, including recruitment of children and use of sexual violence as a method or tactic of war are committed on a widespread basis in South Sudan where the continuing violence has devastated the lives of millions. The situation requires an immediate

halt to hostilities and enhanced monitoring and reporting to this council. The EU reiterates its call for accountability; those responsible for the violence must be brought to justice. The EU supports the establishment of a Human Rights Council mandate which would be complementary to the work of the African Union's Commission of Inquiry (COI). We reiterate our call for the immediate publication of the COI's report and look forward to the outcome of the AU's ministerial meeting in July which will consider the report.

Regarding Egypt, the EU is seriously concerned about terrorist activities and conflict in the region and about their dire consequences on civilians and on security personnel in Egypt. The EU is also seriously concerned about the growing number of death sentences and recent executions, the referral of civilians to military courts, prolonged pre-trial detention and disproportionate sentences against demonstrators and prominent activists, and about increased pressure on civil society. Due legal process and freedoms of expression, association and assembly must be safeguarded in line with the Constitution.

The EU remains deeply concerned by the arrest, detention and harassment of peaceful human rights defenders in China. We urge the Chinese authorities to release those detained for the peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression and association, as recognised by China's Constitution and under its international human rights obligations, including Liu Xiaobo, Ilham Tohti, Gao Yu and Pu Zhiqiang. We also encourage China to provide legal protection for all defenders of women's human rights, as we celebrate this year the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. Overall, China should promote an enabling environment for civil society activity, and in this respect, we hope that China will take into account concerns voiced by the international community about the draft law on foreign NGOs management. Lastly, the EU urges China to address the root causes of unrest and foster dialogue with and between different ethnic groups, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The EU expresses concern about the recent approval of the law on "undesirable organisations", the continuing implementation of the law "on foreign agents" and the persistence of limitations on the freedoms of assembly, media and expression in the Russian Federation. The climate of increased suspicion, repression and intolerance leads to attacks against the opposition, journalists as well as human rights defenders and to a shrinking space for independent civil society.

The EU continues to call on Russian authorities to free people illegally detained and abducted from outside Russia, such as Nadiya Savchenko, Oleg Sentsov and Eston Kohver.

The EU is very concerned about the continued disrespect of the international commitments on human rights and fundamental freedoms by Azerbaijan, and condemns the persecution of human rights defenders, including NGO members, journalists and lawyers. We call for the release of all those arrested and detained in relation to their human rights and civil society work, and remind Azerbaijan to abide by its international obligations to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights to a fair trial and humane treatment.

We remain concerned by the human rights situation in Uzbekistan, particularly the mistreatment and imprisonment of human rights defenders, including through the use of additional sentences to extend detentions, reports of the continued use of torture and major restrictions on political activity and the press. We encourage Uzbekistan to move forward with the implementation of human rights and labour reforms, working in cooperation with UN bodies, and engage with UN Special Procedures.

We are also concerned by continued limitations on freedom of expression and freedom of association in Turkmenistan, as well as reports of torture and the use of incommunicado detention. We encourage Turkmenistan to implement reforms and urge the authorities to fully engage with UN treaty bodies to address these issues.

We are deeply concerned by the situation in Venezuela, in particular the non-respect for international commitments on human rights and the restriction of fundamental freedoms. We are especially concerned about the deterioration in the condition of members of the political opposition who have been imprisoned for several months or longer. We call on the Venezuelan government to allow a democratic opposition as an integral part of a democratic society.

Finally, regarding the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the EU remains gravely concerned at the continuing tensions and violence on the ground. The EU regrets that Israel has not granted access to the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict. While acknowledging the cooperation of Palestinian and Israeli authorities with the UN Headquarters Board of Inquiry, the EU calls on all parties to fully cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms. Respect for human rights and international humanitarian law are key factors for peace and stability. The future development of the EU relations with both the Israeli and Palestinian partners depends

on their engagement towards a lasting peace based on a two-state solution as well as on the shared values, particularly on democracy and respect for human rights, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, good governance and international humanitarian law.