



EUSR for Human Rights – Newsletter – October 2025

The already desperate situation in **Sudan** became even more alarming during the month of October. After **El-Fasher** fell to the **Rapid Support Forces** on 23 October, more details are emerging about the atrocities committed by the RSF against the civilian population. I am horrified by alarming reports of sexual violence, killings of humanitarian workers or the sick and wounded in hospitals, and many other horrific acts, including the targeting of civilians based on their ethnicity, and being prevented from evacuating in the context of denied humanitarian assistance. It is vital that such atrocities urgently end, and international law be upheld by all actors. Moreover, these crimes must all be investigated and their perpetrators held accountable.

The current newsletter comes at a time when we are witnessing protests following the general **elections in Tanzania** (29-30 October 2025), and I am deeply concerned by the level of violence accompanying these protests; the people of Tanzania have the right to peaceful demonstrations. I also found the process leading up to the elections deeply disturbing, given the reports of systematic suppression of the opposition. This month, other situations of concern included **the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** and **Burkina Faso**.

On 29 October, the High Commissioner for Human Rights [expressed his concern](#) regarding the killing of over 100 Palestinians overnight in a wave of airstrikes in **Gaza** following the death of an Israeli soldier. Indeed, despite the **ceasefire** entering into effect on 10 October. In addition to an extremely fragile ceasefire, until today, we are seeing continued restrictions on the entry of **humanitarian aid** into the Gaza Strip. The situation in the **West Bank** continues to worsen, while Israeli strikes in the **South of Lebanon** have also increased.

Russia's illegal war of aggression against **Ukraine** and its dramatic consequences for Ukraine and its population remain of course an important focus of my work. In a meeting with the **Head of the Mission of Ukraine to the EU, H.E. Vsevolod Chentsov**, we agreed that human rights must be at the core of any discussion about the war, for it is people and their rights who are primarily impacted. The plight of deported and forcibly transferred Ukrainian children and their families, that of prisoners of wars, civilian detainees and veterans, are stark illustrations of the effects of war, both immediate and long-lasting. We also discussed national and international efforts towards accountability, as well as Ukraine's efforts, despite challenging conditions during the war, to progress on social reforms, including childcare protection reforms (de-institutionalisation of children).

Since the beginning of my mandate, I have closely followed the alarming democratic backsliding and increased repression in **Georgia**, jeopardising the country's Euro-Atlantic perspectives. Following months of extensive crackdowns and intimidation of dissenting voices, on 4 October, **local elections** took place in the absence of international monitors, due to Georgian authorities' refusal to invite them in due time. The elections were boycotted by a large part of the opposition, and turnout was relatively low.

Peaceful protesters, human rights defenders, journalists, and opposition politicians continue to be targeted for exercising their fundamental rights. I want to pay tribute to the endurance of the Georgian people, as they place the struggle for democracy, individual freedoms and the rule of law above their own safety and wellbeing. The actions of the Georgian authorities are alarming and

contradictory to what we expect from an EU candidate country. These are also the messages I conveyed in an [interview](#) with a Georgian journalist.

The situation in **Myanmar** remains of grave concern. Displacement at a massive scale continues, and the humanitarian situation in and around Myanmar also remains increasingly alarming. The instability in Myanmar has created a climate of lawlessness that especially benefits organized crime, with the strongest effect the most vulnerable groups and major spillover effects across the region and beyond.

At the end of 2025, the military junta in Myanmar, while continuing its ruthless attacking and bombing against civilians, is planning to hold **sham elections**. I have [urged](#) all countries in the region to weigh in and pressure the regime to change course towards dialogue and peaceful transition, as continued instability remains the main obstacle to inclusive economic growth in the dynamic South East Asian region. The crisis deserves greater international attention and concerted action, including to promote accountability, which I will continue to advance together with ASEAN partners.

HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUES

In early October, I had the honour of co-chairing the **20th EU–African Union Human Rights Dialogue**, held in Brussels. The Dialogue remains one of the most important platforms for our two Unions to discuss shared human rights priorities in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect. This year's meeting focused on the topics of **non-discrimination, shrinking civic space, the human rights dimensions of peace and security, and human rights in the digital sphere**, among other important issues. I also raised with the AU the concerning trend of pushback against the **human rights of LGBTIQ+ persons** in some African countries. Our exchanges were open and constructive, and I was encouraged by the continued readiness of our African partners to engage on sensitive issues with openness and ambition in a global context where multilateralism and the universality of human rights are increasingly contested.

In the lead-up to the Dialogue, I also hosted a **roundtable discussion** with a great number of African and European civil society organisations and activists. Their testimonies provided a sobering picture of the challenges faced by human rights defenders, journalists, and community leaders across the continent - but also showed their courage and determination to continue their work despite growing pressure. I conveyed their key messages during the Dialogue, stressing that civil society must remain an integral partner in shaping and monitoring our cooperation.

In mid-October, I conducted a mission to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for the **6th ASEAN–EU Dialogue on Human Rights**. During this mission I found out that EU's consistent stance on human rights and multilateralism continues to be recognised as a stabilising and credible reference point in the region. The Dialogue with ASEAN was preceded by the **4th ASEAN – EU Civil Society Forum**, where I met many committed and vibrant human rights activist from the region.

The Dialogue itself brought together representatives from ASEAN Member States, the EU, national human rights institutions, and civil society to exchange views on how to advance the protection and promotion of human rights in both regions. Discussions focused on key areas such as access to justice, business and human rights, the right to a clean and sustainable environment, and digital rights, and confirmed our strong mutual interest in working together. The Dialogue reaffirmed our support to multilateralism, and underlined the importance of keeping human rights at the centre of ASEAN–EU relations.

In the context of the Dialogue, I also had the pleasure of meeting with many brave and dedicated **civil society representatives from Malaysia and other ASEAN countries**. They shared insights on a wide

range of human rights issues - from the rights of refugees and migrant workers, to labour and environmental rights, freedom of religion or belief, gender equality, and the protection of minorities.

I was especially moved by the testimony of the **Sisters in Islam Forum (SIS)** on the challenges faced by women in the region, as well as by my in-depth discussion with the **Geutanyoë (All of Us) Foundation** on the human rights abuses linked to the crisis in and around Myanmar. Despite the many complex challenges, it is deeply encouraging to see that so many civil society organisations continue to advocate for human rights even as civic space is shrinking worldwide.

OTHER BILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

During my mission to the 6th ASEAN–EU Dialogue, I also held bilateral meetings with senior **Malaysian officials**, including members of Parliament’s Special Select Committee on Human Rights, Election and Institutional Reform, the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM), and representatives of state-linked enterprises. We discussed Malaysia’s institutional reform process, the promotion of civic space, and the protection of refugees and migrant workers. I also shared the EU’s latest experience on corporate sustainability and human rights due diligence, an area where Malaysian authorities and businesses are showing growing interest. I also visited the UNHCR Refugee Center in Kuala Lumpur, where I witnessed first-hand the vital work being done to protect and assist refugees in challenging circumstances.

Earlier this month I had the pleasure of opening the **5th EU–Philippines Subcommittee on Good Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights** in Brussels. Our dialogue with the Philippines is rooted in partnership and mutual respect. It allows us to acknowledge progress while addressing remaining challenges - from accountability and justice reform to the protection of civic space and fundamental freedoms.

In the margins on the **Paris Peace Forum**, I was honoured to meet with the **Prime Minister of Armenia, Nikol Pashinyan**. EU-Armenia relations are closer than ever, as Armenia continues its democratic transition. During the discussion, we re-confirmed our shared commitment to deepening our partnership. I was pleased to hear more about the Prime Minister’s reform agenda to strengthen the rule of law and fundamental rights. Particularly his commitment to the independence of the judiciary and the integration of the displaced Karabakh Armenian population are commendable. In Brussels, I also met with the ambassadors of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and I intend to continue close coordination with both in the future.

On 22 October, I met with **Hind Kabawat, Syrian Minister for Social and Labour Affairs**. We discussed the importance of rebuilding the social fabric in the country, much of which has to do with accountability for victims and survivors. I continue to underscore the need to ensure accountability for both past and ongoing violations in Syria, ensuring a victim and survivor centred approach and consistently involving civil society in all work to advance justice and accountability. We further discussed the new regulatory framework for the registration of Syrian and international NGOs, and I conveyed some of the concerns that had been raised with my office.

We also discussed the recent **Electoral College vote**, including women’s and minority representation in the new People’s Assembly. My wish is that the new legislature addresses justice and accountability as it embarks on drafting a new constitution and new legislation for a country in transition. I further emphasized the need to continue the **National Dialogue**. I confirmed my commitment to undertaking a mission to Syria in the new year, and I hope I can meet Minister Kabawat soon again in Damascus.

In addition to an ongoing pattern of dehumanization, Palestinian Ambassador **H.E. Amal Jadou** underscored that realities were being created in Gaza, which are rendering life impossible for

Palestinians. She also underlined the potential long-term impact of two years without education for children in Gaza. There is a need for psychological rehabilitation at a massive scale in addition to addressing the gender aspects of the violence.

Ambassador Jadou was also extremely concerned about the situation in the **West Bank**, including plans for *de jure* annexation, ongoing settlement expansion and settler violence, including against children. There has been a rapid proliferation of gates severely restricting movement between Palestinian towns and villages. I reassured my office would continue shedding a light on the situation, including by reporting on meetings with civil society, and I also raised many of my concerns with the new Israeli Ambassador, **H.E. Avi Nir-Feldklein** in a separate meeting.

Two days after the anniversary of the **7 October 2023** terrorist attacks and shortly after the announcement of the so-called **Trump Plan**, I discussed with the Israeli Ambassador the need to urgently release the remaining hostages, guarantee the entry of humanitarian aid, demilitarize Hamas, and secure an end to the war, including by advancing a two-state solution. More specifically, I underscored the need to ensure the compliance with **international law** in all future plans for Gaza, as also raised by a number of [UN rapporteurs in their recent statement](#), particularly guaranteeing the right to self-determination, as confirmed in the July 2024 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). We also discussed the situation in **Lebanon** and **Syria**, including compliance with international law. Both the Israeli and Palestinian Ambassadors urged me to **undertake a mission**.

MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

At the beginning of the month, I met with the **Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Michael O’Flaherty**. At a time when human rights and the rules-based international order are under increasing pressure, working with partners is crucial. We discussed issues of common concern, including the situation in Ukraine, the externalisation of asylum and migration policies, and the global trend towards a shrinking civic space. We agreed on the importance of using all EU tools and leverage to advance human rights.

I further visited Vienna upon the invitation of the Director of the **Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Sirpa Rautio**, as well as **Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Beate Meindl-Reisinger**. FRA has an important and complementary mandate to the one I hold, as it monitors and assists EU Member States in upholding and improving human rights protection within the Union. Many human rights issues have both internal and external dimensions, including migration, security and the protection of our rights and privacy online. I was therefore delighted that we committed to working closely together, and we have already begun this cooperation through the FRA Director’s participation in Human Rights Dialogues that I co-chair, including the EU-AU Dialogue.

In Vienna I also met with the **OSCE Rapporteur on Freedom of the Media (RFoM), Jan Braathu**, who presented his work to monitor media freedom and protection of journalists throughout the OSCE region. As is clear from the recent RFoM [Policy Manual on Safeguarding Media Freedom in the Age of Big Tech Platforms and AI](#), the EU continues to be a norm setter for human rights protection, spreading far beyond our borders. This is equally true for the EU Anti-Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (Anti-SLAPP) regulation. The RFoM stressed the importance of swift transposition and national laws, as well as for the EU to support similar efforts in OSCE countries not belonging to the EU.

In my meeting with the recently appointed **AU Special Representative for the Sahel, Mamadou Tangara**, we discussed the political and security developments across the region. We agreed that closer coordination is indeed necessary between the EU, AU and the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS) in order to be effective and promote stability, respect for human rights, and adherence to international humanitarian law across the Sahel. The EU will continue to support African-led peace and stability efforts in the Sahel.

DEATH PENALTY AND TORTURE

On 24 October, we commemorated the **World and European Day Against the Death Penalty**. In my [video statement](#), I emphasized that less and less countries in the world undertake executions. However, we do see an alarming spike in executions in countries like Iran or Saudi Arabia. The EU opposes the death penalty in all circumstances, and supports countries in their commitment to move towards moratoria as a step towards full abolition. Egypt, for example, has committed to the reduction of the number of crimes punishable by the death penalty, which I will also discuss during my upcoming mission.

This month, I also met with the **Global Consortium for Death Penalty Abolition and the United Against Torture Consortium (UATC)** to reaffirm the EU's steadfast commitment to ending torture and the death penalty everywhere. These discussions were an important opportunity to acknowledge the tireless work of our partners and to underline that both issues remain central to the EU's human rights agenda. I was deeply encouraged by the progress achieved through EU-supported projects bringing together civil society, survivors, and advocates united by a single goal: the protection of human dignity.

The EU will continue to lead efforts to achieve universal ratification of the **UN Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol** and to advance global standards such as **the Torture-Free Trade Treaty**. Working hand-in-hand with our partners, I am determined to ensure that the EU's voice remains strong and consistent in defending the right of every person to live free from torture and the threat of execution.

RULE OF LAW, JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The **International Criminal Court (ICC)** being a cornerstone of international criminal justice, I remained focused on the ICC and on the imperative to support the Court, in words and deeds, and to defend it from any attempts aimed at obstructing the course of justice and undermining the international criminal justice system. It was the topic of a series of very constructive discussions I had with ICC officials, EU colleagues, and civil society representatives.

In preparation of my mission to Lebanon, I met with victims and survivors of the **Beirut Blast** as well as **Legal Action Worldwide** and **Human Rights Watch**, key organizations involved in their cases. The meeting left a deep mark on me: the blast continues have an impact of the collective psychology of Lebanon, and the victims and survivors have been left without justice, redress or any meaningful answers related to the loss of their loved ones. Recent statements by the Lebanese government are encouraging, but need to be matched with tangible action. The meeting with the victims and survivors reinforced my conviction that addressing the rule of law, human rights, justice and accountability will be key to obtain results on all aspects of Lebanon's recovery from years of instability and economic crisis. Ahead of my mission to Lebanon, I will also hold discussions with OHCHR and civil society.

DEMOCRACY AND CIVIC SPACE

National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) play a key role in advancing human rights, rule of law and democracy. I had the opportunity to meet with **Debbie Kohner**, Secretary General of the **European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)**, to explore potential avenues for collaboration between our offices and identify areas of mutual interest. Our discussion touched on

the changing human rights landscape, accusations of EU double standards, and the importance of addressing human rights and peace and security not separately, but as issues that are interconnected. We also had an important exchange on the role of NHRIs in the EU's neighbourhood.

My office has been frequently alerted by civil society regarding the recent crackdown **against opposition figures** in Türkiye. On 20 October, Istanbul's mayor, **Ekrem İmamoğlu**, faced his second trial regarding allegations of the validity of his university diploma. His trial has been postponed to December. Equally on 20 October, an indictment was issued against **seven detained mayors** representing the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), among 200 people altogether, who facing criminal allegations in relation to public tenders in their municipalities. Civil society have expressed concerns regarding the possible political motivations behind these criminal charges. Similar concerns were already raised by the EU in a [March 2025 statement](#), following the detention of İmamoğlu, and also in the European Commission's recent [Enlargement report](#).

This month, I have also raised concerns regarding **civic space in Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories** (OPT), which has been raised with my team by numerous local and international NGOs. While the imminent registration requirement of INGOs – including the measure of obliging them to disclose a list of national and international staff - has been postponed to the end of December, it is essential for the Israeli authorities to reconsider this measure. Currently, it is already very difficult for INGOs to deploy expatriate staff to the West Bank, while the Trump Plan for Gaza includes the notion of only “approved” INGOs being allowed to distribute aid. All such limitations have a detrimental effect on humanitarian aid delivery. This is even more alarming in a context where the UN-led humanitarian coordination system is already under threat in Gaza.

On 1 October, I met with **Al Mezan**, **Al Haq**, and the **Palestinian Center for Human Rights** (PCHR)—all of which have been targeted by the recent US sanctions in relation to their support to the ICC. I expressed my solidarity with the three organizations, who explained that their operations had been impacted through the closure of bank accounts, unpaid salaries, potentially lost online archives, in addition to a chilling impact on civic space both in the OPT and worldwide. Many national and international partners are also hesitating to collaborate with them. As mentioned in an earlier [statement](#), the three organizations play a crucial role in monitoring the human rights situation in the OPT.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In October, I received – along with the Commission President and the High Representative/Vice-President – a letter from **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja**, a prominent Danish-Bahraini human rights defender detained in Bahrain for nearly 15 years. He informed us about his intention to start a hunger strike on 29 October 2025, as all his previous attempts to secure his release had failed. In my [reply](#) to him on behalf of the EU Institutions, I emphasized my continued efforts to secure his unconditional release, and expressed concerns about his deteriorating health as well as limitations to his family contacts. I was thankfully informed that Mr. Al-Khawaja suspended his hunger strike following the letter along with another letter from the Danish Prime Minister.

I continue to be alarmed by the situation of human rights defenders in **Iran**. Also in October, I have raised serious concerns regarding the case of Swedish-Iranian Dr. **Ahmad Reza Djalali**, covered in last month's newsletter, including during my call with the **Swedish Foreign Minister**.

With a view to giving a face to the many individuals who are affected by the war in Ukraine, I recently announced my mentorship of one of the youngest Crimean political prisoners detained in Russia. **Appaz Kurtamet** was 19 when he was first detained and tortured by the Russian Federal Security

Service, before being sentenced to seven years in prison. He is now 23. His story is one of many: hundreds of Ukrainians remain unjustly jailed by Russia, and we must keep their voices alive and demand freedom.

My Office has further closely monitored the situation of the **Cuban human rights defender, Jose Daniel Ferrer**, a case raised in several newsletters by my predecessor. Fully respecting Mr. Ferrer's decision to go into exile, I deeply regret that the situation has brought him to this conclusion. Respect for civil and political rights and improved prison conditions are and will be consistently raised ongoing engagements with Cuba.

I am increasingly concerned about the phenomenon of **transnational repression (TNR)**, which I decided to raise in a recent [video interview](#) with **Samar Elhussieny**, Executive Director of the Egyptian Human Rights Forum. She explained that TNR is on the increase worldwide, taking the form of the harassment of human rights defenders abroad as well as the denial of consular services, which even poses the risk of rendering newborns stateless or renders it impossible for women who face domestic violence to obtain a divorce. Ms. Elhussieny also mentioned the notable case of Turkish-Egyptian poet, **Abdul Rahman Yusuf Al-Qaradawi**, still disappeared in the United Arab Emirates.

I further spoke at the multistakeholder dialogue on **mobility and protection of human rights defenders** organised by a coalition of civil society organisations and the OHCHR Regional Office in Brussels. The meeting gathered key actors from the EU around a discussion on the most pertinent challenges faced by human rights defenders who have to relocate to the EU, including obtaining visas, access to housing and employment. I stressed the importance of the work done by human rights defenders, the important role that the EU plays in ensuring their protection, and the need to address remaining policy gaps.

In a bilateral meeting with the **UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor**, I had the opportunity to thank her for her important role in making sure individual human rights defenders are not forgotten. I share her conviction that it is essential not to lose sight of human rights defenders experiencing long-term imprisonment.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

On 28 October, I had the honour of opening the [third Joint EU-Bahrain Conference “Ensuring Freedom of Religion and Belief \(FoRB\): The Practice of Promoting Coexistence”](#), co-organized with Bahrain's King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance (KHGC). The conference gathered officials, religious leaders, academics, business figures, and civil society to reflect jointly on a roadmap towards ensuring FoRB in today's polarized world. The EU has a deep interest in advancing dialogue with Bahrain and other countries in the region on the freedom of religion and belief. Unfortunately, all around the world, persons continue to be discriminated, persecuted, and sometimes even killed because of their religion, beliefs or opinion.

The promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief for all individuals around the world remains an essential priority of EU's external action. FoRB and freedom of expression have equal value and importance, and they reinforce each other as well. The discussions at the conference demonstrated that faith, when guided by respect and understanding, can be a powerful force for peace, coexistence and tolerance. In the margins of the event, I also had discussions about the overall EU-Bahrain relationship, as I would like to engage with the Bahrainis on both FoRB and other areas of common interest.

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Seventy-five years after the adoption of the **Geneva Conventions**, the principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) are still of utmost relevance and importance. Yet, in too many theatres, medical personnel is not only being denied access to people in need, but is being targeted, in violation of IHL.

Médecins sans frontières brought to my attention the situation of Dr. Mohammed Obeid, an MSF orthopaedic surgeon who was arrested in October 2024 by Israeli forces during a military operation on Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital. According to WHO, more than 300 healthcare workers from Gaza have been detained by Israeli forces since October 2023, at a time when medical needs are dramatically heightened.

My office was also informed by **Humanity and Inclusion** that the organization is unable to bring **assisted devices** – considered a dual-use items - to Gaza, putting the **lives of persons with disabilities** in danger. They further emphasized the need to allow for urgent **medical evacuations** from Gaza. More generally, NGOs have raised concerns about the overall redirection of aid away from the UN-coordinated humanitarian system, and risks of this being spread elsewhere in the world as well, against core humanitarian principles.

With the Palestinian Ambassador and various NGOs, including the **Norwegian Refugee Council**, we also discussed the ongoing impact of the prevention of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (**UNRWA**) from operating in the OPT, which was also addressed in an **ICJ Advisory Opinion** on 22 October, in which the Court concluded that as the occupying power, Israel is obliged to lift restrictions on UNRWA's operations and facilitate relief provided by the Agency.

IHL is not meant to prevent wars, but to preserve humanity in wars. Its erosion exacerbates human suffering, weakens the prospect of post-conflict recovery and reconciliation, and fuels cycles of impunity. During the **Paris Peace Forum**, in a panel discussion with ICRC President **Mirjana Spoljaric-Egger**, French and Spanish Ministers of Foreign Affairs **Jean-Noël Barrot** and **José Manuel Albares**, and moderated by **Hichem Khadhraoui**, Executive Director of the **Center for Civilians in Conflicts (CIVIC)**, we underscored the need to safeguard IHL and the international rules-based order. **The Global Initiative to Galvanize Political Commitment to IHL** launched last year by ICRC and six states has garnered significant support and is putting IHL back on the agenda.

PEACE AND SECURITY

On 2 October, I took part in the [conference](#) "**Pathways to Stability: Rethinking the EU's Role in the Great Lakes Region**", organized by the **Europe-Central Africa Network (EuRac)** and the **Just Future Consortium**. It was a timely and insightful exchange with regional actors, civil society representatives, and fellow policymakers. The discussions offered a valuable opportunity to reflect on the EU's engagement and to take stock of the challenges that continue to threaten peace and stability across the Great Lakes region. Throughout the sessions, participants highlighted the persistence of insecurity, the narrowing of civic space, and the urgent need for more coherent international action. In the closing panel, I underlined that durable peace cannot be achieved without a people-centred approach, placing human rights and justice at the heart of all political and security processes.

I had the pleasure of moderating an exchange between our High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Vice President of the European Commission, Kaja Kallas, and a group of civil society actors working on peace and security. This "**Implementation Dialogue**" was an opportunity for the HRVP to engage on the EU's peace, security, and defence objectives, and to gather civil society's views on international political and security realities. The EU pursues a **comprehensive approach** to security: while we increase investments in our military capabilities, the EU also remains active in

conflict prevention and in peaceful conflict resolution. The concrete recommendations formulated by civil society demonstrated once again that civil society actors who feel the pulse of society are essential partners.

GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND LGBTIQ+

In October, the [annual report of the UN Secretary-General on Women, peace and security \(WPS\)](#) was published. Unfortunately, it paints a grim picture of the state of the world from a WPS perspective, concluding that four times more women and children were killed in armed conflicts in 2023-2024 compared to 2021-2022. Moreover, in 2024, sexual violence against girls increased by 35% compared to 2023. Also the work of women human rights defenders and peacebuilders has become more dangerous.

Sadly, the findings of the UN Secretary-General have been proven correct in the context of the ongoing violence in **El-Fasher**. According to UN Women, for more than 500 days, women and girls in El-Fasher have endured killings, siege, bombardment, deliberate starvation, rape (including gang rape), sexual slavery, forced marriage, and abductions.

My team also had a meeting with Palestinian civil society to discuss the **gender aspects** of the war in **Gaza** and the increasingly alarming situation in the **West Bank** and **East Jerusalem**. As much of the documentation on the situation is conducted by men, many aspects related to the specific impact on women often go unreported. Moreover, as several Palestinian NGOs have been targeted by Israeli or international sanctions, organizations working on gender issues have been increasingly attacked for working on “western” agendas.

In Brussels, I met with **Graeme Reid, UN Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)** whose mandate was recently extended by the Human Rights Council. We jointly expressed concerns about the global backlash against LGBTIQ+ individuals, and discussed joint strategies to counter these developments, including by reaching out to non-traditional partners through cross-regional alliances. The Independent Expert explained that there were increased attacks against public expressions of identity, foreign agent laws, hateful rhetoric, and SOGI was increasingly a driver of forced displacement.

As an example, civil society in Türkiye has made me aware of a leaked version of the so-called **11th Judicial package**, amending a number of laws, including the Turkish Criminal Code and Civil Code with the aim of targeting the LGBTIQ+ community in the country. If confirmed accurate, the implications of these changes would be drastic. To address similar developments, we agreed with the Independent Expert on the need to continue empowering civil society, particularly in the contexts of US aid cuts.

The meeting with the Independent Expert coincided with the publication of the European [Commission LGBTIQ+ equality strategy 2026-2030](#). For me, it is key that this strategy also remains a core focus of our external action. In my interactions – both internal and external – I continue to emphasize that we owe it to future generations to protect what was hard-won by those before us. When we slide back on language, we also slide back on rights in reality.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND NATIONAL MINORITIES

I had an enriching exchange with representatives of the **Maasai community from Tanzania**, focusing on the human rights implications of conservation and relocation policies, as well as Maasai civic and political rights in the context of the Tanzanian General elections in October. They shared concerns about access to essential services, participation in decision-making, and the preservation of their traditional way of life. I truly believe that Indigenous People must be meaningfully consulted, and must

be able to remain on their ancestral lands if they so choose. I reaffirmed the EU's commitment to constructive engagement with the Tanzanian authorities on these issues.

On 9 October, I met with the **OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), Christophe Kamp**, with whom we discussed the situation of national minorities in the OSCE area, including in Ukraine, Moldova, the Western Balkans and Kyrgyzstan. The mandate of the HCNM has primarily a conflict prevention function, including through the monitoring of tensions between communities, providing legislative advice and addressing thematic issues of concern, including language or education policy, media, access to justice, kin state relations, socio-economic participation and gender. Mr. Kamp explained that the EU accession process was an important point of leverage to advance minority rights, although he reminded that many players did not hesitate to instrumentalize the minority card.

Finally, my Office received concerning information regarding the use of force in the context of demonstrations of Indigenous Peoples in **Ecuador**, resulting in a fatality, injuries among protestors and a number of arrests.

LOOKING AHEAD

In October, I started the preparations for my upcoming mission to Egypt. The first-ever **EU-Egypt leaders' summit** was held in Brussels on 22 October, with encouraging signals on human rights. Egypt was also elected to the Human Rights Council on 14 October, which I discussed in my first meeting with **Egyptian Ambassador H.E. Ahmed Abu Zeid**. I also commenced my engagement with **Egyptian civil society** and the **Egyptian National Human Rights Council**.

As the **5th EU-Saudi Arabia Human Rights Dialogue** will take place on 17 November, I had a preparatory phone conversation with my counterpart, Head of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, **Dr. Hala al-Tuwaijri**. I have also started initial discussions on a possible mission to **Jordan**, which will take place next year.

In November, I also co-chair the **EU-Brazil Human Rights Dialogue** in Brussels. The EU and Brazil enjoy a close partnership in the promotion and protection of human rights bilaterally and through our multilateral engagement, including on the protection of human rights online and human rights and the environment. Shortly after our Dialogue, Brazil will host COP30 in Belem.

Ahead of my **interaction with both the** and the **Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)** and **Subcommittee on Human Rights Subcommittee (DROI)** on 11 November 2025, I started my engagement with the European Parliament. I had an introductory meeting with DROI Chair **Mounir Satouri** to discuss our many common interests, including media freedom, human rights defenders and political prisoners, transnational repression, gender equality and women's rights, rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals, rights of persons on the move and protecting the International Criminal Court (ICC).

We further discussed the preparation of our respective upcoming missions as well as the outcomes of recent human rights dialogues and other engagements. We also shared notes on various country contexts, including Ukraine, Israel and the OPT, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria and Morocco. We also underscored that as the European Parliament has a critical role in the negotiation of the **Multiannual Financial Framework**, it will be key to secure sufficient funding for human rights programming at both the country and global levels.

Kajsa Ollongren

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