



EUSR for Human Rights – Newsletter – July & August 2026

The time has come for my last newsletter as EUSR for Human Rights, as I will be taking on a new role as Secretary-General of the European External Action Service (EEAS), starting 1 September. As I wrap up my year as EUSR, I would like to take stock of the work we did and also reflect on some of the lessons I drew.

Throughout the year, I **visited 19 countries**; took part in 10 **Human Rights Dialogues**, and had over **50 bilateral meetings** with representatives of third countries and multilateral organizations in Brussels. I visited key **multilateral hubs** – some of them multiple times – and took part in 20 **international conferences**. I interacted with hundreds of **civil society representatives** and **human rights defenders**. I further engaged with over 30 media outlets, published **over 40 videos** on social media, and launched **dedicated campaigns** on a number of themes. I tried to issue **statements** when the voices of victims and survivors were otherwise not heard.

More important than number of social media posts or meetings held were of course the **results** achieved. This is not a role where victories are fast or frequent, but every now and then, **human rights defenders and political prisoners walked free** and were able to reunite with their loved ones. Legislative amendments made by parliaments around the world introduced rights and freedoms. In August, the **death penalty was abolished in Lebanon**. None of this was my work alone, and is especially the result of decades of tireless efforts of human rights defenders, advocacy groups and concerned citizens.

Although **international humanitarian law (IHL)** was indeed one of my core priorities, conflict parties continued to work blatantly against some of the oldest and most widely accepted rules of international law, and serious **violations of IHL** continue in Ukraine, Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Lebanon, Sudan and many other places. The **institutions of international law**, too, including the UN and the International Criminal Court, have been the subject of ruthless campaigns to discredit their role. The death of **Radko Mladić** – convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes – served as a strong reminder that justice *can* be served, and that we must continue fighting for accountability.

At the beginning of my mandate, I outlined a **more effective way to communicate** about human rights, and I would now like to outline some conclusions **on EU's external action on human rights**. Moving forward, I hope that we:

- 1) Continue to insist that human rights are **universal norms**, rather than “European” or “Western” values.
- 2) Remember that human rights are good for **growth and competitiveness**, and therefore, in the strategic interest of both the EU and other countries.
- 3) Use countries’ **own obligations** as a starting point for an equal partnership on human rights, demonstrating deep understanding of **partners’ needs**.
- 4) Continue to base the EU’s comprehensive security approach on both **hard and soft security**.

- 5) Counter the crackdown on the **rules-based international order** whilst fighting for a **more equitable multilateral system**.
- 6) Continue to actively support the **preservation of international humanitarian law (IHL)** and **international criminal law**, including the International Criminal Court.
- 7) Collectively **safeguard** the hard-fought **language of rights** to avoid backsliding on rights in reality.
- 8) Project **self-confidence** in the EU's high standards and accountability tools, whilst acknowledging our **shortcomings**.
- 9) Use **all tools** in the EU's toolbox to advance human rights, demonstrating a **Team Europe** approach.
- 10) Most importantly, **lead with empathy**, standing up for those who need us most.

SITUATIONS OF CONCERN

In July, the centre of gravity of the war in **Sudan** moved towards North Kordofan and Darfur. Consequently, we have witnessed a humanitarian collapse as violations, mass displacement, famine and spreading disease have reached unprecedented levels. According to [UNICEF](#), at least 330 children were killed or injured in Sudan during the first six months of 2026, with [drone attacks](#) responsible for 60% of child casualties in North Kordofan. Survivors of **sexual violence** – including “Yousra” who spoke in one of my [videos](#) published in August – recount gruesome systematic rape and sexual slavery. The **UN Fact-Finding Mission** [concluded](#) in its report that the attacks in **El Obeid** constitute similar markers of genocide as during the fall of El-Fasher in 2025. In July, the High Representative also issued a [statement](#) on the escalating violence in El Obeid.

Therefore, I saw the necessity of [bringing together](#) civil society, UN and EU partners to discuss what more can be done to end the atrocities in Sudan. Together with the Office of the EUSR for the Horn of Africa and with the support of the **Irish presidency**, over 50 participants from 20 Member States, representatives of EU institutions, the UN and NGOs, came together for a discussion, which provided valuable ideas, including for ongoing mediation efforts

Participants appreciated this unique format, which facilitated a fruitful exchange of views on ongoing UN and EU activities. At the same time, a number of gaps were identified, including the need for consistent monitoring and enforcement of the measures adopted, both at EU and international level. My team is currently **compiling the recommendations**, on the basis of which next steps will be identified. My office will continue to work on this initiative in collaboration with the Irish presidency. I was pleased to see that in July, the EU enacted a [total ban](#) on the trade of Sudanese gold and prohibited the export of mercury and cyanide to Sudan.

As we [marked](#) **Ukraine's** Independence Day, civilian casualties from Russia's air attacks in Ukraine have sharply risen over the summer months. According to the [UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission](#), at least 437 Ukrainian civilians were killed in July, including 17 children. This marks the highest monthly civilian casualty count since March 2022. OHCHR called shocking the scale and intensity of long-range attacks impacting residential buildings and critical civilian infrastructure.

In Brussels, I met with Ukrainian human rights defenders **Oleksandra Matviichuk** and **Maksym Butkevych** for a powerful roundtable discussion on the human dimension of Russia's war against Ukraine, with particular attention to the plight of **Ukrainian civilian detainees held by Russia**. Both stressed that the issue remains insufficiently visible in peace-related discussions, despite widespread

reports of arbitrary detention, torture, sexual violence, denial of medical care, and the absence of effective mechanisms to secure releases.

I underlined that civilian detainees, prisoners of war, deported children, survivors and affected families must remain central to the EU's engagement on Ukraine, and that accountability is essential both for justice and to counter further abuses. There was broad support for strengthening coordination between Ukraine, civil society, the EU and international partners, including through a new **informal coordination platform on the human dimension of the war**, which I will help steer to ensure that the voices of victims, survivors and Ukrainian civil society continue to inform our action.

Over the summer months, we saw a severe **escalation of the war** in **Iran**, including the collapse of a brief US-Iran ceasefire, US air campaigns, and Iranian retaliatory action. Simultaneously, Iran significantly escalated its **domestic repression**, including through a sharp increase in executions after unfair trials, targeted actions against minorities, and new crackdowns on communication, which were also discussed by my team with Iranian human rights defenders, who, even when abroad, do not feel safe from the regime.

The beginning of July marked 1,000 days of conflict since 7 October 2023. According to the UN, July was the deadliest month of the year in **Gaza**, with 152 Palestinians killed in ongoing strikes despite a ceasefire. On 31 July, the US announced an agreement had been reached to disarm Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza, an agreement which also involves the dissolution of Hamas' civilian administration. In August, however, much of this progress was stalled, as Israel returned to pre-ceasefire rules of engagement, launching intense airstrikes on civilian areas and killing dozens of Palestinians. In parallel, Israel has **deregistered over 30 international aid organizations**, contributing to a "[total breaking point](#)" in terms of medical supplies, food and fuel.

In August, we also witnessed unprecedented settler activity and shifts towards annexation in the **West Bank**. Among other developments, we saw the publication of a tender for the construction of over 1,200 housing units under the **E1 settlement project**, on which I have raised alarm bells on several occasions. The High Representative's [statement](#) confirmed the EU's position that settlements are illegal under international law, and that the E1 project fundamentally harms the prospects of a two-state solution. In parallel, on 14 August, Israel unveiled a plan to **transfer West Bank law enforcement powers** to the civilian police, which is a violation of the laws of occupation, and therefore, a flagrant step towards illegal annexation.

In addition to the resettlement of previously evacuated settlements and the establishment of new outposts, Palestinian civilians in the village of **Qusra** [remained trapped](#) inside their homes for over a week, with their water and electricity cut off by settlers. OHCHR [regretted](#) the inability or unwillingness of Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) to protect Palestinian communities under occupation, an obligation under the Geneva Conventions. The Israeli military further extended strict [closure orders](#) under Operation "Iron Wall" of the **Jenin, Tulkarm** and **Nur Shams** refugee camps, leaving over 34,000 secondarily displaced refugees unable to return. In addition, Israeli authorities officially seized property belonging to the **UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees** (UNRWA), which, according to UNRWA Chief **Christian Saunders** is not only an attack against the UN, but also an attempt to dismantle the right of Palestine refugees to return, reparations and compensation.

Although in July, we saw some scaling back of active hostilities in **Lebanon**, which enabled the departure of thousands of citizens from collective shelters, nearly 360,000 citizens [remain internally displaced](#). The period marked significant domestic tension with Hezbollah's rejection of the disarmament conditions and continued airstrikes, demolitions and artillery shelling in the South and Nabatieh governorates, resulting in a high number of casualties in August. On the occasion of his visit,

recently [reappointed](#) UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk [warned](#) that the systematic destruction and denial of returns by Israel could amount to international crimes.

I was pleased to see the deployment of the **Lebanese Armed Forces** (LAF) into a number of pilot zones, and it is essential that the Lebanese government can, as soon as possible, exert its sovereignty over full Lebanese territory, allowing for reconstruction and recovery. This month, the World Bank released its [Economic Monitor](#), which projected a staggering 6.4% contraction for the economy, reversing fragile growth in 2025. In July, I also [intervened](#) on IHL and human rights in Lebanon in the Human Rights Sub-Committee of the European Parliament.

Shortly after my visit to **Syria** – and coinciding with the first visit by a Western Head of State President **Emmanuel Macron** – Damascus witnessed brutal explosions in populous areas, killing over ten people and injuring dozens of others. Many actors indeed have an interest in destabilizing Syria, and I have just issued a number of **internal recommendations** which emphasize the importance of **a rights-based approach** to addressing stability in Syria. I was pleased to hear about the announcement of the completion of the merger of the **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)** into the Syrian military, which will provide an opportunity to advance efforts to ensure the respect for human rights and IHL. The integration of the Kurdish female security forces into the Ministry of Interior will complement ongoing efforts to advance **women's leadership in the security sector**, also extensively discussed during my visit.

The news of 27 August of a devastating **landslide and flooding in Nepal and China** – taking the lives of hundreds while thousands remain missing – demonstrates the extreme events that can be caused by **climate change**, and the humanitarian implications. I also highlighted this on the occasion of the **EU Day for the Victims of Global Climate Change** on 15 July. My thoughts are with all the victims and their families.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

In August, the EEAS published the [Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy](#), to which my team also extensively contributed, and which outlines my efforts across countries and thematic areas. The report presents a murky picture of widespread conflict, shifts away from the international rules-based order, and a crackdown on human rights and civic space. Yet, the report also highlights that human rights remain an aspiration and a source of hope for many around the world.

July and August marked busy months in terms of international days and social media campaigns. On 18 August, we marked **World Humanitarian Day**. On the occasion, my team gathered testimonies from brave humanitarian workers across the world, including [Abbas Ghandour](#) from the Lebanese Red Cross in southern Lebanon, [Dr. Aziza Elmakki](#) from the World Food Programme in Sudan, [Michael Bruce](#) from the International PRIDE Centre working on LGBTQ+ communities at risk in Africa, [Louise Aubin](#), UNHCR's Representative in Malaysia, [Khassan El-Kafarna](#) from Médecins Sans Frontières Ukraine, and [Sohely Subero](#) from AVESSOC in Venezuela (*dedicated web page featuring all humanitarians forthcoming*). I was deeply moved by their courage and dedication in bringing a little light to a world that is too often marked by darkness. We must not forget their efforts, or the risks they take every day to support people in the most difficult circumstances.

Through a recent **video series**, I sought to highlight both the facts and the devastating impact of **conflict-related sexual violence** (CRSV) ensuring survivors' voices are heard. I published four videos in total: one introducing the issue of CRSV, [another](#) on the impact of CRSV on individuals and societies, a [third](#) on the results of the recent report of the UN Secretary General, and a [fourth](#) amplifying the voice of survivors and those working on accountability efforts.

Indeed, CRSV is increasingly used as a weapon of war, with severe consequences not only for individual victims, but also for families, communities and societies as a whole. I have called for greater attention to the long-term impact of these crimes, stronger survivor-centred support, and continued accountability efforts. I also wish to pay tribute to the courage of survivors who have transformed trauma into strength to support others, and to the humanitarian workers who continue to assist victims with dedication and care. As this month, we mark the ninth anniversary of the brutal crackdown against the **Rohingya population in Myanmar**, I considered it essential to feature the story of "[Salma](#)" who told me about the long-term trauma and stigmatization of survivors of CRSV.

In my [video statement](#) on the occasion of the **Day of International Criminal Justice**, I highlighted the importance of accountability, the importance of protecting institutions, and the leadership of victims and survivors. Also related to international justice, together with **EU Special Envoy for Peace in Colombia Adrianus Koetsenruijter**, I published a [video](#) on the "*mujeres buscadoras*" of Colombia – the women searchers of forcibly disappeared loved ones. We honoured them as human rights defenders and peacebuilders, and welcomed Colombia's historic law recognizing their role.

Finally, on a lighter note, in July, I had the honour of hosting my own episode of [Sommar i P1](#), the **largest podcast in the Nordics**. I dedicated my podcast to my relationship with Ukraine, the EU's role in standing up for human rights, freedom and liberty in this impressive country and globally, as well as some reflections on my time as Dutch Defence Minister. For those of you who do not speak Swedish, I invite you to listen to my **summer playlist** on [Spotify](#).

HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUES

In July I had the pleasure of opening the [14th EU-Viet Nam Human Rights Dialogue](#) in Brussels, which provides a key platform to deepen engagement and cooperation on human rights and multilateral topics following the upgrading of bilateral relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. In my remarks, I underlined that Viet Nam's election to a second consecutive term on the **UN Human Rights Council** is an achievement, but also a responsibility to apply and promote greater human rights standards.

Grounded in a constructive and diplomatic spirit, the dialogue enabled honest exchanges on complex issues, during which I emphasized that legal predictability, a vibrant civic space, and fundamental freedoms serve as vital accelerators for sustainable economic growth. I addressed key priorities including civil and political liberties, labour rights, and the absolute necessity to end transnational repression, reinforcing the EU's commitment to continuous, result-oriented engagement with Viet Nam to advance shared human rights standards.

JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

I remain deeply concerned about the growing pressure on the international criminal justice system, including statements by **Secretary of State Marco Rubio** encouraging countries to distance themselves from the **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)**, as well as the recent sanctions imposed on **ICC President Judge Tomoko Akane** of Japan and Senior Trial Lawyer **Abdoulaye Seye** of Senegal. As confirmed by the [High Representative](#), such pressure is unacceptable. States must be free to determine their own commitments to international justice without coercion, and those working to investigate and prosecute the gravest violations of human rights and international law must be able to carry out their duties independently and without intimidation.

In August, after her sanctioning, I spoke with ICC **President Akane** to convey my support to the ICC amidst these challenges. At a time when international justice is under increasing pressure, it is more important than ever to defend the independence, integrity and central place of the ICC in the fight

against impunity. Recent decisions by several countries, including **Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso** and **Venezuela**, to withdraw from the ICC are deeply regrettable, as they risk weakening accountability, undermine the fight against impunity, and send the wrong signal to victims of the gravest crimes.

On the occasion of the **International Justice Day** (17 July), Amnesty International published a [special report](#) on the 20 years of work carried out by the **African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights** (2006–2026). The report takes stock of the court's first two decades of operation and examines both its achievements and the challenges fulfilling its ambitious. The Court has established itself as an important regional human rights institution delivering over the past 20 years around 150 judgments. The EU supports the functioning of the human rights' institutional framework on the African continent, both through technical expertise and financial assistance. I very much regret that I was unable to visit this important institution during my term of office, and I hope that my successor will find a suitable opportunity to do so.

On 4 August, we [marked](#) six years since the devastating **Beirut Port explosion**. Although, like the [EU Delegation](#) to Lebanon, I welcome recent progress on the investigation, including the completion of the domestic investigation in March this year, naming 70 officials and security officers. However, until today, after years of procedural delays and political obstruction, there is still no indictment. On the anniversary, the Minister of Justice reassured the victims and survivors that the Public Prosecutor's Office had given him an indication that the legal submission would be completed within 60 to 90 days. I continue to stand with the victims and survivors, and call for truth, justice and accountability.

INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY; INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Earlier this month, following last month's deepened collaboration with regional EUSR offices, I met with **EUSR for the Horn of Africa Annette Weber** to discuss the situation in Sudan. She updated me on the EU's ongoing efforts in support of the mediation process, including advancing humanitarian access. We also discussed how EU input can help ensure that proposals on ceasefire monitoring, civilian dialogue and the protection of critical civilian infrastructure are better connected to the reality on the ground. I emphasized the importance of ensuring that international engagement is firmly grounded in international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians and accountability.

I also strengthened cooperation with **EUSR for the Middle East Peace Process Christophe Bigot**, particularly on human rights and IHL. Our exchange focused on **Gaza** – including developments around the Board of Peace – and the **West Bank**, including the impact of the ongoing violence on civilians. In my new capacity as Secretary General, I will continue to work closely with the various EUSRs and keeping the vision of a two-state solution alive whilst also ensuring that human rights and accountability remain at the centre of EU engagement.

I recently met with members of **The Elders** — **Mary Robinson, Helen Clark** and **Hina Jilani** — following their visit to the Middle East. They shared serious concerns about developments in the West Bank, including *de facto* annexation, settler violence, the E1 settlement project, and the treatment of Palestinian detainees, while also underlining the importance of supporting Palestinian state-building and respect for international law. I took careful note of their messages and ensured that these concerns were passed on to senior decision-makers.

Over the summer, my office met with **Shahbaz Israr Khan**, Director for Europe and Asia at **Médecins Sans Frontières** (MSF) for an exchange focused on the humanitarian and accountability dimensions of the war in **Ukraine**. MSF presented its recent [report](#), *Destruction of healthcare in Ukraine: a deliberate and calculated pattern*, documenting the scale of attacks on healthcare and their impact on civilians and medical personnel. MSF described a deeply concerning pattern of attacks on clearly marked

medical vehicles, hospitals, ambulance bases and offices, with strong indications that many incidents may have been deliberate. The discussion highlighted wide-ranging implications of these attacks and the growing need to ensure accountability for violations affecting healthcare, civilians and other protected persons and objects.

I was struck by the recent [joint call](#) by **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Mirjana Spoljaric** and the **UN Secretary-General** for urgent action on **autonomous weapons systems**. At a time when we are witnessing the growing use of drones and other emerging technologies in Ukraine, Sudan, Gaza and elsewhere, this message could not be more timely. We must ensure that technological developments in warfare remain firmly grounded in international humanitarian law and human responsibility, and that life-and-death decisions are never removed from meaningful human control.

RULE OF LAW, TORTURE AND DEATH PENALTY

After a year of regular discussions with the Lebanese authorities, including during my mission in November, I was thrilled to learn about the long-anticipated adoption of the bill to **abolish the death penalty** in **Lebanon** on 11 August. This is not only a significant development for Lebanon – which has had a *de facto* moratorium since 2004 – but for the entire region, as it is the first country in the region to move towards abolition, setting a powerful example. As there are several reverse developments across the region, I hope Lebanon's example will encourage others to follow suite. I was also pleased to see the passing of the Media Law and Banking Law, which I also extensively discussed during my mission, which will advance human rights, the rule of law, accountability and the freedom of expression. In [this Substack article](#) I shared Europe's experience of **promoting the abolition** of the death penalty.

Like the Office of the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR), I am appalled by the mass execution of 11 persons in eastern Libya after a flawed military court trial. These executions represent the first in 15 years, and I call upon the authorities to stop executions, which are incompatible with the right to life.

While it is understandable that victims and survivors demand fast-tracked solutions to justice in **Syria** – including the recent **death sentences** issued for Bashar al-Assad and his accomplices – it is essential that international fair trial standards are respected and lessons learned of transitional justice processes around the world are taken into consideration. As the **People's Assembly** convened for its inaugural meeting on 12 July and will start its legislative work, it is equally essential that all new legislation – including the **Transitional Justice Law** – are reviewed against international human rights law. I continue to call upon the People's Assembly to reconsider the inclusion of the death penalty as a punishment in the new Transitional Justice Law. The EU's position is that the death penalty is unacceptable in all cases and all circumstances, irrespective of the crimes committed.

I was alarmed to hear about the alleged torture of former White Helmet volunteer and haemophilia patient **Mohammad Ghamira** while in the custody of security forces. While in June, my interlocutors in Syria – including the **Minister of Interior Anas Khattab** – reassured me of a commitment to breaking from Assad era practices, Syrians for Truth and Justice [documented](#) at least 14 cases of individuals being tortured or having died in custody between June 2025 and June 2026. I continue to call for the integration of international human rights law standards into the work of law enforcement agencies in Syria. The Minister of Interior has indeed committed to investigate the death of Mr. Ghamira, ensuring full accountability.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, DEMOCRACY, CIVIC SPACE, MEDIA FREEDOM

In July and August, I observed with concern further crackdowns on political dissent. Incidents included the arrest of opposition figures and activists such as local democratic working group leaders in **Zimbabwe** and opposition figures facing abuse allegations in **Uganda**. I met with representatives of **Europe-Central Africa Network** (EurAc), who introduced me a Burundian CSO representative in exile. We discussed the state of civic space in **Burundi**, which is currently preparing for its next presidential elections, scheduled for May 2027. Yet, in parallel, it is facing a silent but multidimensional crisis, with dire human rights, security, and socio-economic challenges.

In **Tunisia**, as the government implemented electricity and water shutoffs during the summer heatwave, thousands of citizens faced supply disruptions, sparking demonstrations across the country. 25 July also marked five years since **President Kaïs Saïed** temporarily suspended parliament and began ruling by decree. To mark the occasion, thousands of protestors gathered in Tunis to demand the return of democracy. The crackdown in Tunisia against civil society and human rights defenders – including against **Saadia Mosbah**, **Sihem Bensedrine** and **Sonia Dahmani** as well as the “**conspiracy against state security case**” – has been one of my key concerns this past year.

I also continue to be alarmed about the situation of human rights defenders and dual EU-Bahraini citizens **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja** and **Mohammed Habib Al-Muqdad**, who continue to be arbitrarily detained in Bahrain and suffer from serious ailments. As the EU and Bahrain launched negotiations in July for a **Strategic Partnership Agreement**, I also hope that their unconditional release – including on humanitarian grounds – will become a reality.

In July, UN Special Procedures [warned](#) that the invalidation by **Belarus** of passports belonging to eight forcibly expelled former political prisoners could amount to **transnational repression** and could lead to statelessness. Pardoned former political prisoners remaining in Belarus also continue to face restrictions, including revoked passports, surveillance, prosecution risks and employment barriers. Meanwhile, repression has increasingly extended to the information space, with authorities expanding their “extremist” lists to foreign media and outlets. On 17 August, **EUvsDisinfo** was designated as extremist material, further demonstrating the authorities’ tightening control over information. These developments come six years after the fraudulent 2020 presidential elections, when mass democratic protests were met with unprecedented violence and repression, which continue to this day.

In August, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in **Russia** [raised alarm](#) that a new Russian law on exiles would intensify both domestic and transnational repression. The 11-year sentence against opposition politician **Lev Shlosberg** further illustrates the authorities’ crackdown on dissent and anti-war voices.

Over the summer, I also received updates by civil society on the situation in **Azerbaijan**, which included the lengthy sentences handed down to journalists as well as reports of alleged ill-treatment, intimidation and denial of medical care affecting journalists. Civil society groups have also brought to my attention the situation of independent media and journalists in Kazakhstan in the context of parliamentary elections, and in **Uzbekistan**.

In July, I met another cohort of **African Union (AU) Media Fellows** during their study trip to Brussels. The group comprised journalists from 22 African countries. I was once again impressed by their dedication and passion for international affairs, including on human rights and the EU’s engagement with the African continent. I am certain that my successor will continue these unique exchanges. My

team also engaged with **Palestinian journalists**, who raised the devastating death toll of journalists in armed conflicts across the region, and increased limitations on the freedom of speech in the OPT.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

On we [marked](#) the **International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence based on Religion or Belief**. I continue to be deeply alarmed by reports that **Qatari** authorities have issued deportation orders against four prominent members of the Bahá'í community — individuals who serve in voluntary roles serving their community's welfare. Together, these four individuals have called Qatar home for over a century and a half. Their forced removal does not end with them — it tears apart their children, uproots elderly parents, and forces them to face displacement with no time to arrange new medical care, education, or even a place to live.

What makes this especially troubling is that the deportation orders were issued verbally, with no formal documentation. Without paperwork, these families have no case to challenge, no evidence to bring to human rights bodies, and no basis for an asylum claim. This deliberate discrimination has persisted for decades, forcing some 100 Bahá'ís out of Qatar in the past fifteen years alone. The pattern seems to be accelerating, and I call upon the Qatari authorities to view diversity and religious tolerance as a strength in a nation that is home to many people who have sought better lives in the country.

I am also gravely concerned by the wave of violent **raids carried out against Baha'i homes** across **Iran** over the last week of August. These operations, conducted without judicial warrants, appear to have targeted individuals and families solely on the basis of their religious belief. Reports indicate that security agents scaled the walls of private residences, arrested parents in front of their young children, and in some cases threatened families with violence. These raids extended across several provinces and resulted in more than a dozen arrests.

This pattern of mass confiscation can be described as state-led theft, and appears calculated to drive the Baha'i community toward financial ruin, a continuation of Iran's misuse of its own constitution and its longstanding policy of excluding Baha'is from economic life. These actions form part of a broader crackdown and a documented and sustained pattern of persecution and scapegoating of Iran's Baha'i community. Cousins **Peyvand** and **Borna Naimi**, for example, have remained arbitrarily detained since March 2026, after being arrested and falsely accused of capital offences, while reportedly being subjected to torture and mock executions.

OTHER THEMES

In July, UN Special Procedures called on **Kyrgyzstan** to withdraw its transgender bill as it would violate its domestic and international human rights obligations. I fully support this call.

I also held an exchange of views with representatives of **Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting** (DAFOH) regarding allegations surrounding organ transplantation practices in Asia and donor data transparency. During our discussion, I reaffirmed the EU's commitment to promoting high ethical standards and World Health Organization principles in organ transplantation around the World, making use of EU's established bilateral channels and dedicated human rights dialogues with third countries of concern.

LOOKING AHEAD

I would like to thank everyone for the support to my mandate and for trusting me in this role. It has been an honour working with all the brave defenders and civil society advocates around the world.

Of course, I also want to extend thanks to the whole EU system, Member States, and especially my team without whom I would not have been able to do my job across the globe. In my future role, I will carry my experiences as EUSR, and you can rest assured that human rights will remain high on my agenda.

Kajsa Ollongren

EU Special Representative for Human Rights

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