



European Union

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(13 June – 1 July 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, 22 June 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 Candidate Countries Montenegro* and Albania* and the EFTA country Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

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 **Syria**, **Belarus**, **Eritrea** and **South Sudan**, as well as the situations in **Ukraine** and **Burundi**, 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 remains seriously concerned about the human rights situation in **Egypt**. The arrests of journalists, activists, protesters and human rights defenders, as well as the pressure imposed on civil society and on human rights defenders, including through travel bans, court summons, prolonged pre-trial detention and the threat of asset freezes, continue a worrying trend of restricting the freedom of expression, of association and of assembly. The EU is, moreover, particularly concerned about reports of torture, enforced disappearances, poor detention conditions and the handing down of death sentences, as well as mass trials. The EU underlines the need for accountability for all violations. The EU calls on the Egyptian authorities to continue their efforts to shed light on the circumstances of the deaths of Italian citizen Giulio Regeni and French citizen Eric Lang and bring

* Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

about justice. The EU is fully aware of the serious challenges posed by the terrorist threat to Egypt's stability and security, and in particular the impact of terrorism on the Egyptian population. The EU recalls the need to tackle terrorism with full respect of international human rights standards and fundamental freedoms, as also enshrined in the Egyptian constitution. The EU also recalls the importance of assuring economic, social and cultural rights that are essential in order to achieve sustainable stability, prosperity and human security. The EU stands ready to help Egypt in fulfilling these objectives.

In **China**, the on-going detention and harassment of human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and labour rights defenders and their families remains a major concern. Individuals detained for seeking to protect the rights of others and for the peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression, including Guo Feixiong, Liu Xiaobo, Ilham Tohti, Xu Zhiyong and Wang Yu, should be released. The EU also reiterates concerns about the treatment of five Hong Kong booksellers following the testimony from one about his detention and forced confession. The recent adoption of a national security package, including the counter-terrorism law, further raises serious questions about China's respect for its international human rights obligations and international standards, as well as for its own constitutional safeguards and stated commitment to upholding the rule of law. In view of that, the EU calls for full and faithful implementation by China of accepted UPR recommendations, including in relation to ensuring a safe and enabling environment for civil society, including foreign NGOs. The EU also urges China to respect cultural diversity and freedom of religion or belief of the members of different ethnic groups, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang, and foster dialogue with the said ethnic groups.

The EU expresses concern about the ongoing implementation of the laws on "foreign agents" and "undesirable organisations" and the ever increasing limitations on the freedoms of assembly, media and expression in the **Russian Federation** leading to a shrinking space for independent civil society. The EU condemns the attacks against the opposition, journalists as well as human rights defenders and remains particularly worried by the situation in the north Caucasus region. It calls on the authorities to align their policies with Russia's international human rights commitments.

We are concerned by the deterioration of the situation in **Venezuela**, which puts at stake the economic and social rights of the population, including the right to health and the right to food. We also underline the importance of respect for Venezuelans' civil and political rights, including the freedom of expression and assembly. Political prisoners should be released.

Regarding the situation in the **occupied Palestinian territory**, the EU remains gravely concerned at the continuing reports of human rights violations and at the cycle of violence and loss of human life. The EU firmly condemns all terror attacks and violence from all sides. The EU is deeply concerned about the human rights implications of the increasing number of demolitions, as well as confiscations and evictions. The use of administrative detention, especially of minors, is also of concern. The EU is increasingly worried about the pressure and restrictions imposed on Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations and the civil society. 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.