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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

60th session

Item 4 General Debate

General debate on human rights situations that require the Council's attention

23 September 2025

EU Statement

Mister President,

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

The candidate countries North Macedonia and Montenegro* align themselves with this statement.

With regard to the situations in Belarus, Burundi, DPRK, Venezuela and Nicaragua, we would like to refer to our statements during the respective interactive dialogues. During this

HRC session, we also address other situations such as Haiti or the atrocities committed in Sudan.

We reiterate our resolute condemnation of **Russia's illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against Ukraine** that grossly violates international law, including the UN Charter. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its repercussions for European and global security in a changing environment constitute an existential challenge for the European Union. We demand that Russia ceases its aggression and withdraws all forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine immediately, completely and unconditionally, and fully respects Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence within its internationally recognized borders. The EU is deeply concerned over the increasing number of civilians killed and injured, due to Russia's use of drones and explosive weapons, including with wide area effect in urban areas, and on civilian infrastructure and civilians. We express our deepest concern about Russia's continued attacks on Ukraine's civilian population. It is now for Russia to show its willingness to achieve peace. The EU continues to condemn in the strongest possible terms the atrocities committed by Russia in Ukraine, as observed in the latest UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) report, such as summary executions of prisoners of war and civilian detainees, the systematic and widespread use of torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence. We call on Russia, and its accomplice Belarus, to end the unlawful practice of child deportation and forcible transfer, to stop the illegal adoptions of Ukrainian children and to ensure their immediate and safe return to Ukraine. Russia must stop the illegal adoptions of these children, which violate their right to their Ukrainian nationality, their identity, name and family relations. We call on Russia to stop the militarisation and indoctrination of Ukrainian minors and youth as per the latest OHCHR reports on the Human Rights Situation in Ukraine. The EU is firmly committed to ensuring full accountability for all crimes under international law, human rights violations and abuses stemming from the Russian war of aggression as well as victims' rights to justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition. The EU will continue supporting efforts towards the establishment of the *Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression Against Ukraine* that would enjoy the broadest cross-regional support and legitimacy, and towards the establishment of a future compensation mechanism. We remain steadfast in our commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, grounded in the principles of the UN Charter and international law and welcome all efforts towards that end.

We express our deep concern about **Russia's** continuing systematic crackdown on civil society, especially on human rights defenders, lawyers, independent media and journalists, as well as the repression of democratic political opposition, LGBTI persons, Indigenous Peoples, persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and

citizens with dissenting voices. We reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional release of all those arbitrarily detained, including political prisoners. We remain concerned about torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of persons deprived of their liberty in Russia and call on Russia to continue cooperating with the European Committee on the Prevention of Torture. We continue to call on Russia to abolish its repressive legislation and comply with international human rights law, and to ensure a safe and enabling online and offline environment, for all. We also call on Russia to protect online civic space and prevent internet shutdowns and online censorship, unlawful surveillance, information manipulation, disinformation and cybercrime, in full compliance with international human rights law. We call on Russia to fully implement all outstanding rulings of the European Court of Human Rights, to end its political misuse of the judiciary and law enforcement, and to uphold its domestic and international human rights obligations. Russia must ensure that all human rights violations are thoroughly, independently and impartially investigated and that perpetrators are held accountable. We call on Russia to cooperate fully with the UN, and all special procedures.

The EU remains gravely concerned about the situation in **Gaza** as well as the continuously escalating violence in the West Bank. The EU calls for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the unconditional release of all hostages, leading to a permanent end to hostilities, with Israel's security interests and safety for Palestinian civilians assured. We deplore the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, the unacceptable number of civilian casualties, the level of starvation, and the famine in parts of Gaza as stated by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report of August 2025. The EU calls on Israel to fully lift its blockade on Gaza, to allow immediate, unimpeded, safe and predictable access and sustained distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale into and throughout Gaza, and to enable the UN and its agencies, and humanitarian organisations, to work independently and impartially to save lives and reduce suffering.

Israel must fully comply with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. The EU recalls the imperative of ensuring the protection of all civilians, including humanitarian workers, at all times, as well as of civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, tent camps and UN premises. The EU reiterates its unequivocal condemnation of the 7 October 2023 terrorist attacks, and deplores the refusal of Hamas to hand over the remaining hostages. The EU stresses the essential role of the UN and its agencies, notably UNRWA, which provide crucial support to the civilian population, both in Gaza and the wider region. The EU recalls UNSC resolution 2735 rejecting any attempt at demographic or territorial changes in the Gaza Strip and stressing the importance of unifying the Gaza Strip and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority. Hamas must be fully disarmed and cannot be part of any solution in Gaza. The EU recalls its opposition to any forced displacement of the Palestinian population, which would constitute a violation of

international law. Displaced Gazans should be ensured a safe and dignified return to their homes in Gaza.

Following the report on **Israel's** compliance with Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement, and as a result of an EU-led dialogue, Israel committed to take concrete steps to improve the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The EU recalls that Israel, as the occupying power, has, inter alia, the obligation to protect the population under its occupation. We recall further that Israel is obliged under international law to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches the population in need, and has the obligation to respect and protect relief personnel as well as the responsibility to ensure a safe operating environment for humanitarian workers.

The EU reiterates its strong condemnation of the escalating violence in **the West Bank**, including East Jerusalem, following increased settler violence, the expansion of illegal settlements, Israeli demolitions and Israel's military operation and terrorist attacks against Israel. The EU stresses that the settlements are illegal under international law and reiterates its call on Israel to halt settlement construction and to cease its settlement policy, including demolitions, forced transfers, evictions and confiscations of homes. The EU will also continue to work on further restrictive measures against extremist settlers and entities that support them, as well as against Hamas. Israel must make further efforts to prevent settler violence and fully ensure that perpetrators are held accountable. The EU stresses the importance of respecting and implementing the orders rendered by the International Court of Justice, which are legally binding. The EU will not recognise changes to the 1967 lines, unless agreed by the parties. The EU recalls that annexation is illegal under international law.

The EU remains firmly committed to a lasting and sustainable peace based on the two-state solution and calls on all parties to refrain from actions that undermine its viability. We further call on Israel to cooperate fully with UN human rights mechanisms and special procedures.

The EU positively takes note of the High-Level International Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution.

The EU is deeply concerned about the human rights situation in **Iran**, particularly the persistently high and alarming rate of executions. The EU unequivocally opposes the use of the death penalty, in all cases and under all circumstances, and urges Iran to pursue a consistent policy towards its abolition. The EU calls on Iran to end all forms of discrimination, in law and in practice, against women and girls as well as persons belonging to religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities. We remain concerned about the restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, offline and online. This includes the

internet shutdown in Iran in June 2025. We urge Iran to ensure unrestricted access to information and to uphold all civic freedoms. The EU is gravely concerned by the new wave of arrests, which started in June 2025, and the ongoing harassment and reprisals targeting dissidents, persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, human rights defenders both within Iran and through transnational repression, including on EU soil, and other categories of individuals. The EU is also concerned by the deportations of Afghan citizens. We call on Iran to provide due process and fair trial guarantees for all detainees. The EU demands the immediate and unconditional release of all arbitrarily detained citizens in Iran, including EU citizens and dual nationals and calls on the Iranian authorities to end the distressing practice of detaining foreign citizens with a view to make political gains. The EU also urges Iran to abide by its obligations under the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The EU calls upon Iran to implement all relevant international treaties to which it is a party. We reiterate our call to Iran to allow free and unhindered access to the country for relevant UN Human Rights Council's Special Procedures mandate holders and to fully cooperate with the independent, international Fact Finding Mission.

We reiterate our concerns about the very serious human rights situation in **China**. We urge China to abide by its obligations under national law, including its own Constitution, and international law, to respect, protect and fulfil the rule of law and human rights for all. We also urge China to abolish the death penalty and as a first step to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty, adopt rigorous and transparent procedures for reviewing capital sentences and reporting death penalty cases. Civil society continues to be exposed to harassment, intimidation and surveillance, including at transnational level. China must respect the principle of non-refoulement and refrain from extraterritorial activities (including coercion) that are not in line with international law. We condemn all reprisals against individuals and/or civil society organizations. Numerous reports by UN Treaty Bodies and Special Rapporteurs, and in particular OHCHR's assessment report on human rights in China's **Xinjiang** Uyghur Autonomous Region, confirm that the human rights situation requires the urgent attention of the Government of China and UN bodies and the human rights system. We remain concerned about political re-education camps, mass arbitrary detentions, widespread surveillance, including Residential Surveillance in a Designated Location (RSDL), systemic and severe restrictions on the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion or belief. We reiterate the rights of persons belonging to religious groups to conduct their basic affairs without interference and freely choose their religious leaders. We remain concerned about the use of forced labour and labour transfer schemes, torture, forced abortion and sterilization, birth control and family separation policies, and sexual and gender-based violence, especially in Xinjiang. We urge China to cooperate effectively with the UN High Commissioner and his

Office, and with international human rights mechanisms, including towards the implementation of the recommendations included in the assessment report on the human rights concerns in Xinjiang and follow-up to the report as well as through the facilitation of visits of the High Commissioner and the Special Procedures mandate holders to regions such as Xinjiang and Tibet.

The human rights situation in **Tibet** continues to be dire. Indicators of this include obligatory boarding schooling. We are deeply concerned over reports that Tibetan schools teaching Tibetan language and culture have been shut down and that Chinese authorities have insisted that all students attend state schools where Tibetan is only taught as a stand-alone subject. We encourage China to cooperate with international human rights mechanisms, including all relevant Special Procedures mandates, and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee against Torture. We continue to closely monitor the situation and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of human rights defenders who, among others, Gulshan Abbas, Anya Sengdra, Ekpar Asat, Chadrel Rinpoche, Rahile Dawut, Ding Jiayi, Ding Yuande, Dong Yuyu, Gao Zhen, Gao Zhisheng, Go Sherab Gyatso, Golog Palden, He Fangmei, Huang Qi, Huang Xueqin, Hushtar Isa, Yalkun Isa, Ji Xiaolong Li Yanhe, Peng Lifa, Qin Yongming, Ruan Xiaohuan, Semkyi Dolma, Tashi Dorje, Tashpolat Tiyp, Sakharov Prize winner Ilham Tohti, Wang Bingzhang, Pastor Wang Yi, Kamile Wayit, Xie Yang, Xu Na, Xu Zhiyong, Yang Henjung, Yang Maodong, Yu Wensheng, Pastor Zhang Chunlei and Zhang Zhan, as well as EU citizen Gui Minhui whose right to consular access must be respected.

We remain concerned about the human rights situation and the shrinking civic space in **Hong Kong**. We urge the Chinese government and the Hong Kong authorities to restore full respect for the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, and democratic principles, and to preserve Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy under the 'one country, two systems' principle, in compliance with Hong Kong's Basic Law and China's domestic and international obligations. The repressive use of the National Security Law and of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance continues to undermine human rights and fundamental freedoms. This applies to the ongoing trial against Jimmy Lai. In light of his deteriorating health condition, we call upon the authorities to consider his immediate release. Of particular concern is the extraterritorial application of these laws, including the decision to repeatedly issue arrest warrants for individuals living outside Hong Kong, including an EU citizen. The sweeping changes in the electoral system eroded democratic principles and political pluralism.

The EU reiterates its serious concerns about the deeply worrying situation and continued deterioration in the areas of democracy, rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the independence of the judiciary in **Türkiye**. The EU remains concerned about

targeting of political parties, democratically elected mayors, civil society representatives, journalists, academics, human rights defenders, LGBTI persons, and others, including through arbitrary arrests and detentions. The rights of elected officials as well as the right of peaceful assembly need to be fully respected. As an EU candidate country and member of the Council of Europe, Türkiye is expected to apply the highest democratic standards and practices. In this context, in line with Article 46 of the ECHR, we call on Türkiye to comply with the judgements of the European Court of Human Rights, including regarding the release of Osman Kavala. The EU reiterates its calls on Türkiye to comply with its obligations under international law, including human rights law and to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and the rule of law - including the property rights of persons belonging to minorities and legal entities representing minorities. Human rights are non-negotiable and will continue to be an integral part of EU-Türkiye relations.

We condemn the increasing acts of terrorism, which have affected **Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger** for many years. We remain deeply concerned about the significant deterioration of the situation of the civilian population in those countries, marked by a substantial increase in the number of direct victims of violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law. The EU is equally alarmed by the dramatic shrinking of civic space in the three countries, characterised by growing erosion and repression of the already reduced civic space and rule of law, amid growing restrictions and attacks against critics and dissenting voices, including political parties, civil society organisations, human rights defenders and media professionals. We urge authorities to uphold all their obligations under national and international law, to stop without delay any form of violence, and ensure an enabling civic space, free, independent, pluralistic media and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including through improved access to justice.

Thank you.

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



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