

# HRC 46 - EU Statement by Josep Borrell at HRC46

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## Statements on behalf of the EU

Madam President, High Commissioner, distinguished colleagues,

One year ago, Secretary General Antonio Guterres stood before this gathering and made a call to action for human rights. He was right then but the urgency of the challenge remains. Across the world in the middle of a major global health crisis, human rights and democracy are under threat.

In many places, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the erosion of the democratic fabric. Governments are censoring journalists, manipulating information, locking up peaceful protesters, attacking human rights defenders and eroding women's rights. We have even seen attempts to undermine the International Criminal Court, the court of last resort, which we rely on to bring the worst perpetrators to justice.

We all must do more on human rights. As EU we do our part. We have just started implementing a new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy. And to further strengthen our collective action, we have established an EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime.

Madam President,

Across the world, human rights and democracy are facing serious challenges. Protesters of all ages have taken to the streets of Belarus, Russia, Chile, Lebanon, and Hong Kong to defend their freedoms and stand up against injustice.

We have witnessed unacceptable repression against peaceful protesters in **Russia**.

The EU condemns the Russian authorities' decision to sentence Mr. Navalny; it is unacceptable and politically motivated. We deplore the widespread detentions and disproportionate use of force against protesters and journalists. We reject the legal pressure on independent civil society, human rights defenders and independent

political voices. These restrictions run counter to Russia's obligations under international human rights law. In all our countries, people must be able to express different opinions and exercise their right to demonstrate without fear of repression.

We welcome the attention of this chamber to the worsening human rights situation in **Belarus** in the aftermath of the presidential elections. The EU condemns the disproportionate violence of the state authorities against peaceful protesters, including the systematic use of torture. The EU expects a complete and transparent investigation into all alleged violations and abuses.

I also want to reiterate the EU's call on **China** to comply with its obligations under national and international law to respect and to protect human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities in Xinjiang, in Tibet and Inner Mongolia. Once again, we urge China to allow meaningful access to Xinjiang for independent observers, including High Commissioner Bachelet. This is key to enable an independent, impartial and transparent assessment of the grave concerns that the international community has. I also reiterate our call on China to respect fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, and democratic principles in **Hong Kong** and to ensure its high degree of autonomy under the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle.

The situation in **Tigray** in Ethiopia is alarming. There must be full and unrestricted humanitarian access. This is not an EU demand - this is international law. In **Myanmar**, the coup by the army is a clear violation of the country's constitution and an unacceptable attempt to overturn the democratic will of the people of Myanmar. We call for the immediate restoration of the legitimate civilian government. Democracy must prevail.

Madam President,

Let me underscore our firm support to High Commissioner Bachelet and to the work of the Human Rights Council. Of course, all members of the Human Rights Council should respect, protect, fulfil and promote human rights. And the Council itself should be a safe place. Reprisals against those who attend these sessions or cooperate with the UN system are unacceptable.

Madam President,

The world needs a strong voice on human rights as we strive to rebuild post-COVID19. The Human Rights Council needs to continue advocating for the rights of victims, to multiply the voices of those that face discrimination and to call for

accountability for violations wherever they occur.

The EU stands ready to do its part. And we count on others to join us in this effort.

**Tags:**

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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