



Euro-Med Monitor  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

## Letter to EU Parliament Member

### Subject: EU Should Play a More Central Role in the Middle East

08/07/2019

Respected Member of the EU Parliament,

We, at the Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, would like to send our warmest regards and congratulations on your membership in the ninth EU Parliament. We sincerely hope your new or continued term will be productive, successful and inspiring to others.

As you know, one of the main challenges that is lively debated across the EU is the issue of refugees and migration outbreak since 2015.

Here at the Euro-Med, we try not only to understand the migration crisis itself, but we try to dig deeper and analyse the underlying reasons that cause the continuity of emigration from the Middle East to Europe in the first place. Most notably, we work tirelessly to document Human Rights violations that sustain an oppressive atmosphere across the region that pushes people towards escaping such repression.

Therefore, we would like to bring to your attention a briefing of such Human Rights violations in the region, as we call upon you to give a special focus to the Middle East and work positively to address its problems and crises in order better address the implications of Middle East problems on the EU whether in terms of economic and political ones or the influx of migration.

We would like to finally reiterate that the EU essentially enjoys a positive reputation across the Middle East, and such advantage should be used to play a more central and positive role in the region.

Please feel free to write us if you have any questions.

PS. Attached the briefing in the next page.

Kindest Regards,  
**Euro-Med Team**

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## **Protracted Conflicts and Human Rights Violations Across the Middle East**

### **Yemen**

The protracted conflict between the Saudi-led coalition and Houthi forces has taken a terrible toll on Yemeni civilians and rendered Yemen the world's "worst humanitarian crisis," according to the UN. The coalition's scores of indiscriminate airstrikes have killed and wounded thousands of civilians in violation of the laws of war. Houthi forces have fired artillery indiscriminately into Yemeni cities and launched rockets into populated areas of Saudi Arabia. The coalition has used banned cluster munitions; the Houthis banned landmines. The Houthis, pro-government forces, and United Arab Emirates-backed forces have arbitrarily detained, abused or "disappeared" scores.

### **Sudan**

Since mid-December 2018, protests sparked across Sudanese towns and cities objecting to price increases and calling on President Omar al-Bashir, in power for 29 years, to step down. In response, government forces have been using live ammunition on protesters, killing scores and injuring many more, and arbitrarily detained hundreds of civilians in particular, opposition party members, protesters, students, journalists, doctors and lawyers. This continues even after President Al-Bashir was ousted by the Sudanese Army, which took over his place amidst continuity of civilian protests.

### **Saudi Arabia**

Following the state-sanctioned murder of prominent Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018, Saudi Arabia faced international criticism, but without sufficient international pressure to hold the perpetrators accountable and put an end to similar violations, Saudi authorities continue to arbitrarily detain peaceful activists and dissidents without trial for long periods, including ten prominent women's rights activists detained after May 2018, in addition to dozens others of human rights defenders who are serving long prison sentences for criticizing authorities or advocating political and rights reforms.

### **Syria**

Warring parties in the Syrian conflict continue to disregard human rights and humanitarian law protections. Over 400,000 have died since 2011. The Syrian government, with the support of its allies, raced to secure territories, using prohibited chemical weapons, unlawful indiscriminate attacks, and withholding humanitarian aid, while anti-government groups indiscriminately attacked government-held areas and prevented civilians fleeing. Both groups carried out arbitrary detentions, kidnappings and torture. While the battle against ISIS is winding down, civilian casualties from US-led coalition airstrikes increased, and their Kurdish-led allies continued to restrict the movement of those displaced from ISIS areas. As active conflict decreased, Russia and Syria called for refugees to

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return and Syria passed laws to facilitate reconstruction even as it continued to violate human rights.

### **Lebanon**

In Lebanon, approximately 74 percent of the estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees lack legal status, restricting their movement and access to work, healthcare, and education. Public critique of authorities results in prosecutions that threaten freedom of speech. Security forces continue to crack down on LGBT activities. Detainees report torture and ill-treatment despite the passage of a 2017 law criminalizing torture. Mismanagement of waste disposal on a national level is alarming, including; open burning of waste, which is threatening the health of nearby residents, despite the passage of a law prohibiting the practice in late 2018. Parliament repealed a law that allowed rapists to escape prosecution by marrying the victim, but women continue to face systematic discrimination and violence.

### **Egypt**

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's government continues to oversee Egypt's worst human rights crisis in decades and has escalated the use of counterterrorism laws to prosecute peaceful dissidents. The government continues to ban most forms of independent organization and peaceful assembly. The government has arrested scores of al-Sisi's critics, including potential presidential candidates, ahead of the 2018 presidential elections that was held in an unfair and unfree environment. Police and the National Security Agency have systematically used torture and enforced disappearances. The government has sent thousands of civilians to military courts, undermined the judiciary's independence, and executed dozens of people following flawed trials.

### **Israel/Palestine**

Israel's maintains entrenched discriminatory systems that treat Palestinians unequally. Its over half-century-long occupation of the West Bank and Gaza involves systematic rights abuses, including collective punishment, routine use of excessive lethal force, and prolonged administrative detention without charge or trial for hundreds. It builds and supports illegal settlements in the occupied West Bank, expropriating Palestinian land and imposing burdens on Palestinians but not on settlers, restricting their access to basic services and making it nearly impossible for them to build in much of the West Bank without risking demolition. Israel's decade-long closure of Gaza, supported by Egypt, severely restricts the movement of people and goods, with devastating humanitarian impact. The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza both sharply restrict dissent, arbitrarily arresting critics and torturing those in their custody.

### **Libya**

Libya's political and security crisis continues as two authorities, the Tripoli based UN-backed Government of National Accord and a rival government based in eastern Libya, compete for legitimacy and territorial control. Protracted armed clashes have left scores of thousands displaced inside Libya and interrupted access to basic services such as healthcare and electricity. Militias and armed groups, often with

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links to the competing governments, harass and persecute civilians with impunity, and carry out arbitrary detention, torture, unlawful killings, indiscriminate attacks, disappearances, seizure of property and forced displacement. Hundreds of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers, including children, who flock to Libya often en route to Europe, risk torture, sexual assault, and forced labor by prison guards, coast guard forces, and smugglers.

### **Algeria**

Despite constitutional amendments passed in 2016, Algerian authorities continues to resort to criminal prosecutions for peaceful speech, using articles in the penal code criminalizing “offending the president,” “insulting state officials,” and “denigrating Islam.” Perpetrators of torture, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions during the internal strife of the 1990s enjoy impunity. The Algerian government blocks the registration of many Algerian nongovernmental organizations working on women’s, ethnic, and human rights, and has maintained its non-cooperation with several UN human rights experts and mechanisms.

### **Iraq**

Authorities across Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, continue to limit free speech, harass and arrest journalists, as well as resort to excessive use of force against protesters. The Islamic State (ISIS) lost the control of territory in Iraq but continues to carry out attacks on civilians and security installations during 2018. Key human rights challenges in the post-ISIS phase include fair trials for ISIS suspects that allow for victim participation, protection of families of suspected ISIS members from collective punishment, free movement of the displaced, cessation of forced returns and displacements, and accountability for abuses by anti-ISIS forces.

### **United Arab Emirates**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) arbitrarily detains and in some cases forcibly disappears individuals who criticize the authorities. The UAE plays a leading role in the Saudi-led coalition which has carried out scores of unlawful attacks in Yemen, some likely war crimes. The UAE was implicated in detainee abuse at home and abroad. Labour abuses in the UAE persist. Migrant construction workers face serious exploitation. Domestic workers’ rights are now enshrined in law, but some provisions are weaker than those accorded to other workers under the labour law. The UAE has denied activists and international human rights organizations’ access.

Sources:  
Euro-Med Database  
HRW Database  
UN Archive

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