



EEAS issues the EU Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2016

The European Union has issued its [Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2016](#), with a country-by-country analysis and a summary of the current and future actions and priorities of the EU in protecting human rights. The report provides a general overview of the past year, commenting on the worsening situation regarding human rights and civil society, as well as emerging complex humanitarian and political crises around the world, which are often a result of authoritarian regimes and autocratic tendencies. Furthermore, it gives an overview of the external policies and actions of the EU as a pivotal actor in promoting and protecting human rights on a global level. The following are selected extracts regarding three country information reports on human rights in Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine.

The Republic of Kazakhstan. The report underlines how the overall **human rights situation in the country has been deteriorating**, as is exemplified by several legislative amendments which have been adopted or are currently in the pipeline, and which represents a serious risk of significantly limiting the scope for civil society to function and violating a number of fundamental rights. **Kazakhstan faced various human rights and democracy problems**, especially in the fields of freedom of expression and freedom of association and peaceful assembly. **Voices critical of the government were often silenced** under the pretext of inciting social discord. Requests for authorisation to hold peaceful demonstrations were often refused. NGOs were subject to numerous and cumbersome reporting obligations hindering their activities.

The EU's priority is to strengthen the efficiency of the institutional framework that allows civil society to be included in the decision-making process and to support civil society capacity building, and in particular to promote freedom of expression, and freedom of association and peaceful assembly. The EU raised concerns in relation to pressure on independent media outlets and the possible negative implications of the new law on payments, as well as the **convictions of Max Bokayev and Talgat Ayan** in relation to land demonstrations in the spring of 2016. **The EU Delegation**, in close coordination with EU Member States and like-minded partners, **conducted outreach initiatives towards the national authorities in support of human rights-related cases and monitored the court case of Max Bokayev and Talgat Ayan.**

In its report, **the EU calls on the authorities of Kazakhstan to show commitment to and respect for international standards in the outcomes of court cases, in particular those relating to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.**

The Open Dialog Foundation has recently issued a [report on political prisoners in Kazakhstan](#), referring to the worrisome politically motivated prosecutions and human rights conditions faced by oppositionists in the country.

The Republic of Moldova. The Annual Report highlights how the **lack of implementation of the rule of law** remains critical in Moldova, despite the adoption of important pieces of legislation by the parliament. The EU encourages the government to increase their efforts in addressing the issue and pursue the reform process in key areas, such as the judiciary and anti-corruption.

In 2016, the EU Council Conclusions on Moldova called for the politicisation of institutions and systemic corruption to be addressed. Moreover, **justice reform and the need to resolutely investigate major banking frauds** were key points in the EU-Moldova political dialogue. EU human rights priorities focus on, among others, the fight against torture and ill-treatment, anti-discrimination and the freedom of the media.

With regard to the judiciary, the report emphasises how, during 2016, a number of high-profile **trials** took place mainly **behind closed doors. Cases have continued or have been opened against representatives of opposition movements, as well as judges and lawyers working on high-profile cases.** Media outlets close to opposition politicians and investigative journalists continue to experience pressure and difficulties in the country, mainly, but not only, because of a **worrying lack of fair competition in the media sector** and heavy concentration of media ownership.

Corruption and deteriorating human rights conditions thus remain a crucial issue to be tackled in Moldova, as reported by the ODF in its report ["The Captured State: Politically Motivated Prosecution in Moldova And Usurpation of Power by Vladimir Plahotniuc"](#).

Ukraine. As outlined by the EU report, the overall human rights situation in Ukraine is heavily influenced by the conflict in the east and the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Russian Federation, which continue to constitute **grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.** In the Crimean peninsula, the situation of the Crimean Tatars remains a particular concern, as well as that of journalists and others who openly oppose the illegal annexation.

The EU and Ukraine continued their joint active engagement on human rights issues. The annual Human Rights Dialogue was held in Kyiv in July 2016, where discussions encompassed the human rights situation in the Crimean peninsula and in the non-government-controlled areas in eastern Ukraine, the **prevention of ill treatment and torture, media legislation and the safety of journalists, as well as the situation of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained in Russia.**

The EU reports that HR/VP and her spokesperson have issued several statements calling for the release of Ukrainian citizens illegally detained in Russia, including Nadiya Savchenko, who was eventually freed. The EU Delegation in Moscow has attended several court hearings. Moreover, the HR/VP Spokesperson also drew attention in public statements to the situation of the Crimean Tatars, including the ban on the activities of the Mejlis and the treatment of its leader Ilmi Umerov.

The ODF has recently issued a [report on Ukrainian citizens who have been subjected to politically motivated criminal prosecution by Russia's law enforcement.](#)

Read the full report:

- [Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World in 2016](#)

Read our reports:

1. ["The list of Kazakhstani political prisoners and persons subjected to politically motivated prosecution by Kazakhstan"](#)
2. ["The Captured State: Politically Motivated Prosecution in Moldova And Usurpation of Power by Vladimir Plahotniuc"](#)
3. ["The list of Ukrainian citizens who have been subjected to politically motivated criminal prosecution by Russia's law enforcement bodies in the years 2014-2017"](#)
4. ["Kazakhstan: Maks Bokayev and Talgat Ayan sentenced to five years in prison for their participation in a peaceful rally"](#)