



Brussels, 5 July 2021

Dear Member of the AFET Committee,

In light of the [upcoming debate](#) of Tuesday, 6 July 2021, on the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (GHRSR), ODF, together with the [Italian Federation for Human Rights](#) and the [Global Committee for the Rule of Law](#), has listed a series of recommendations (please see below) to reinforce the EU's toolbox against human rights abuses. While we hope you'll find these recommendations useful, we thank you for your past and ongoing support on this important matter!

Hitting autocrats where it hurts

Autocrats and criminal officials have assets everywhere, even in the EU, and use them to boost their power at home and influence abroad. Countering anti-democratic behavior means hitting the perpetrators where it truly hurts: Magnitsky-style sanctions, involving asset freezing and travel bans, have finally entered the EU's toolbox with the adoption of the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime mechanism (GHRSR) last December. It allows the EU to sanction those guilty of various crimes, among which are genocide and human rights violations.

A resolution for better tools

While a step in the right direction, the GHRSR has large scope for improvement. In its [resolution](#) of 15 June 2021, the AFET Committee calls for corruption to be included among the crimes covered by the GHRSR, and for the involvement of MEPs and civil society in the sanctions listing process. As the AFET resolution approaches the plenary debate, we call upon you to stand up for democracy worldwide.

What can you do?

Do not leave corruption unpunished. Corruption is the backbone of criminal power structures and constitutes a threat to EU values and functioning: it must be punishable under the GHRSR.

Make the listing process more resilient and transparent. As of now, sanctions lists depend on a fragile process based on the unanimous vote of the EU Council upon proposal from a Member State or the High Representative. This is open to blackmailing and fails to account for bottom-up input and involve civil society organizations in all levels of the decision process. Moreover, the mechanism should foresee the possibility for Members of the European Parliament to draw up sanctions lists.

Make the GHRSR more effective. To improve the effectiveness of the GHRSR, Qualified Majority Vote should be introduced when sanctions are decided upon under the scope of the new mechanism.

United we stand. Canada, the UK, the US collaborate to maximize the effectiveness of their sanctions by sharing information on potential targets across their jurisdictions. The EU must take part in this cooperation if it does not want to waste its efforts.

Prevention is better than cure. Sanctions are not a last resort: they can act as a powerful deterrent to use as soon as misbehavior is detected, before illiberal conduct becomes systemic. They can be used in combination with other policy instruments.

Standing with those on the ground. The EU should establish a protection mechanism for human rights defenders and individuals submitting evidence of human rights abuses or proposals for lists in the making. A bastion of democracy must also be a haven.

It's your turn!

Freedom requires vigilance and care. On 6 July you can do your part in defending human rights advocates and upholding the core values of the EU worldwide. We call upon you to adopt the resolution and make it a brick for the construction of the EU's leadership for global democracy.

Kind regards,

the Open Dialogue Foundation

the Italian Federation for Human Rights

the Global Committee for the Rule of Law