

# Press release – Human rights breaches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mozambique and the Philippines



## **Sakharov laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege – The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**

The European Parliament is greatly concerned by the grave danger currently facing Sakharov and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege and condemns the recent threats to his life, as well as those made against his family and staff members at the Panzi hospital where he works. Since July this year, Dr. Mukwege has received increasingly serious and sustained threats in response to his repeated calls to bring an end to impunity for perpetrators of sexual crimes and massacres in Kipupu, Sange and the Ituri province in the country.

MEPs commend Dr. Mukwege for his courage and his life-long commitment to fighting the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict. They also welcome the UN decision to reinstate security protection for him. The DRC Government must not delay in carrying out a comprehensive investigation into the threats, as promised by DRC President Félix Tshisekedi, says the text.

The full resolution, which also addresses the general human rights situation in the DRC, past and current violence, the exploration of natural resources in the country and other issues, was adopted by 654 votes in favour, 5 against and 26 abstentions. It will be available in full [here](#). (17.09.2020)

## **The humanitarian situation in Mozambique**

MEPs are very worried about the deteriorating security situation in northern Mozambique, in particular in the Cabo Delgado province, and express their condolences to the victims of the ongoing violence. Since October 2017, the so-called Al-Shabaab terrorist group, allegedly affiliated with the armed group calling itself Islamic State of Central Africa Province, has launched over 500 violent attacks in the area, terrorising the local population, claiming over 1 500 lives and leading to the displacement of over 250 000 people.

The resolution underlines that the current security problems further aggravate an already extremely fragile humanitarian situation deriving from high levels of underdevelopment, climate shocks and conflicts. It calls on Mozambique's authorities to take decisive action in countering the Islamist insurgency, while also reminding them of their responsibility to bring all those suspected of terrorist activity to justice through fair trials.

MEPs underline that if not stopped, the insurgency will potentially grow and spill over into neighbouring countries, threatening regional stability as seen in the Sahel and Horn of Africa.

For all the details, the full resolution, adopted by 616 votes in favour, 13 against and 57 abstentions, will be available [here](#). (17.09.2020)

## **The Philippines**

Parliament expresses its deepest concern at the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in the Philippines under President Rodrigo Duterte and calls on the country's government to implement all the recommendations outlined by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to address a range of serious issues, such as the 'widespread and systematic' killings related to the authorities' anti-drug campaign.

MEPs strongly denounce the thousands of extrajudicial killings and other serious human rights violations related to the so-called 'war on drugs'. They also condemn all threats, harassment, intimidation, rape and violence against those who seek to expose allegations of extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations in the country, including human rights and environmental activists, trade unionists and journalists.

Parliament is further alarmed about the deteriorating level of press freedom in the Philippines, and condemns all threats, harassment, intimidation, unfair prosecutions, and violence against journalists, including in the case of Maria Ressa. All politically motivated charges against her and her colleagues should be dropped, says the resolution.

The text was adopted by 626 vote in favour, 7 against and 52 abstentions, and will be available in full [here](#). (18.09.2020)

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## Article – Sakharov Prize 2020: the nominees



**Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya** is a teacher, human rights activist and politician who after her husband's arrest participated in the 2020 Belarusian presidential election as the main opposition candidate. Alexander Lukashenko was officially declared the winner in a contest marred by allegations of widespread electoral fraud and Tsikhanouskaya, after asking for a recount of the votes had to flee to Lithuania in fear of imprisonment. In response to the allegations of electoral fraud, large peaceful protests have erupted across the country and were pushed back by the regime with unprecedented violence. Meanwhile, a **Coordination Council** was established to represent the civic nation of Belarus and to facilitate a peaceful transfer of power.

When the Islamic State arrived in Mosul in August 2014, **Mgr Najeeb Moussa Michael, Archbishop of Mosul**, ensured the evacuation of Christians, Syrians and Chaldeans to Iraqi Kurdistan and safeguarded more than 800 historic manuscripts dating from the 13th to the 19th century. These manuscripts were later digitised and exhibited in France and Italy. Since 1990 he has contributed to safeguarding 8,000 more manuscripts and 35,000 documents from the Eastern Church.

The **Guapinol environmental activists** – Porfirio Sorto Cedillo, José Avelino Cedillo, Orbin Naún Hernández, Kevin Alejandro Romero, Arnold Javier Aleman, Ever Alexander Cedillo, Daniel Marquez and Jeremías Martínez Díaz – are

members of the Municipal Committee in Defense of Common and Public Goods of Tocoa. They are imprisoned for their participation in a peaceful protest camp against a mining company, whose activities had led to contamination of the rivers Guapinol and San Pedro. While other inmates were set free, the Guapinol defenders are still detained and the prosecution has not presented any solid evidence to justify this prolonged detention.

**Berta Cáceres**, assassinated on March 2016, was a courageous ecologist and prominent land rights activist from the indigenous Lenka community in Honduras. She was co-founder of the Council of Indigenous People of Honduras (COPINH). Over more than two decades, she was fighting against land grabbing, illegal logging and mega-projects. She was awarded the Goldman Environmental Award in 2015.

Polish LGBTI activists **Jakub Gawron**, **Paulina Pajak** and **Paweł Preneta**, **Kamil Maczuga** founded in 2019 the website Atlas of Hate, mapping and monitoring the many local Polish municipalities that had adopted, rejected or had pending “anti-LGBTI resolutions” while spreading information to activists, media and politicians. Today, more than 100 municipalities or local authorities in Poland have declared themselves either “LGBTI-free zones” or adopted so-called Regional Charters of Family Values. In 2020, Gawron, Pajak and Preneta were sued by five of those local municipalities, for damaging their reputation and demanding a public apology and economic compensation to “family-friendly organisations” in the five regions.

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## [Joint investigation team leads to dismantling of one of Europe's most active Albanian-speaking networks trafficking cocaine into Europe](#)

[IT](#) | [NL](#)

A 5-year long investigation led by Italy culminated this week in 20 arrests and pre-trial detentions throughout Europe



The Hague, 17 September 2020

An unprecedented international operation involving judicial and law enforcement authorities in 10 countries has resulted in the complete takedown of the Albanian-speaking ‘KOMPANIA BELLO’ criminal group, one of the most active cocaine-trafficking networks in Europe.



In the early hours of 15 September, hundreds of police officers, including special intervention teams in close cooperation with prosecutors and investigative officers, and with the support of Europol and Eurojust, carried out coordinated raids against the members of this highly professional criminal syndicate.

As a result of this joint action, 20 individuals were arrested in Italy (5), the Netherlands (2), Germany (2), Greece (2), Romania (1), Hungary (1), Spain (1), Albania (5) and Dubai (1). The suspects have been placed in pre-trial detention for international narcotic substances trafficking, illegal possession and distribution of drugs and brutal assaults, including murder. These arrests follow those of 84 other members of this criminal group early on in the investigation in Italy, Ecuador, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Germany.

This international sweep follows a complex 5-year long investigation led by the **Italian State Police** (Polizia di Stato) under the direction of the **Public Prosecutor's Office of Florence** (Procura della Repubblica di Firenze). It is considered the biggest of its kind ever against Albanian-speaking organised crime and is the result of a Joint Investigation Team with the participation of Italy and The Netherlands, in which the parties have worked closely together for five years. Close to 4 tonnes of cocaine and over €5.5 million in cash were seized over the course of this investigation.

Your browser does not support the video tag, please click [here](#) to see the video.

### **A sophisticated business model**

For years, international importers of cocaine worked separately from the wholesalers and the gangs distributing the drug on the streets. In this case, the Albanian-speaking network under investigation ditched the entire model and controlled the whole chain – from arranging huge shipments directly from South America to distribution all across Europe.

Using sophisticated encrypted communication means, the organisation's ringleader – a 40-year old Albanian based in Ecuador – negotiated directly with the South American drug cartels, arranged huge shipments of cocaine to the major ports of Europe and, with the help of accomplices based in Italy, the Netherlands and Albania, organised distribution throughout Europe. The cocaine was smuggled across European borders concealed in vehicles equipped with sophisticated hidden compartments.

The criminals laundered their proceeds using an underground alternative remittance system of Chinese origin, known as the fei ch'ien system. Much like the Islamic hawala transfer system, people using the fei ch'ien deposit a sum in a network 'agency' in one country. Another operator withdraws the equivalent amount elsewhere in the world and passes it on to the intended recipient. Leaving not a trace of tell-tale evidence for law enforcement investigators, the network is believed to have laundered millions of euro through this system.

## **A joint strategy to target the whole chain**

**Operation LOS BLANCOS**, coordinated at the international level by Europol and Eurojust, was the culmination of many months of meticulous planning between law enforcement and judicial authorities in preparation for the action.

Initiated by the Italian State Police in 2015, under the direction of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Florence (*Procura della Repubblica di Firenze*), a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) was set up between Italy and the Netherlands with the assistance and financing of Eurojust and Europol. The partners in the JIT have since worked closely together to reveal the actual magnitude and complexity of the criminal activity of the KOMPANIA BELLO gang, to establish a joint strategy and to organise the intensive exchange of information and evidence needed to prepare for the final phase of the investigation.

All through the action day, smooth and effective cooperation took place at many European border crossings. A joint Operational Command Room was set up at Europol's headquarters to coordinate the different actions taking place simultaneously across all the countries involved. A Europol expert was also deployed to Florence to provide appropriate operational support to the Italian authorities, ensuring swift analysis of new data as it was being collected during the action and adjusting the strategy as required. Judicial coordination was provided from a coordination centre at Eurojust, with the real-time involvement of prosecutors and investigative judges for execution and adaptation of the mutual legal assistance requests needed to carry out the cross-border actions.

### **The following authorities took part in this investigation:**

- **Italy:** The Public Prosecutor's Office of Florence (*Procura della Repubblica di Firenze*), the State Police (*Polizia di Stato*),
- **The Netherlands:** Public Prosecutor's Office Amsterdam (*OM Amsterdam*), Financial and Economic crime unit Amsterdam (*Finec*), National Police (*Politie*)
- **Greece:** Hellenic Police (*Ελληνική Αστυνομία*)
- **Hungary:** National Police, Bács-Kiskun County Police Headquarters (*Bács-Kiskun Megyei Rendőr-főkapitányság*) and Chief Prosecution Office of Bács-Kiskun County (*Bács-Kiskun Megyei Főügyészség*)
- **Romania:** Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (*DIICOT*), Prosecutor's Office attached to the Iasi Court of Appeal (*Parchetul de pe langa Curtea de Apel Iasi*), Iasi Brigade for Countering Organized Crime (*BCCO Iasi*), Iasi County Police – Criminal Investigations Department (*IPJ Iasi – SIC*)
- **Germany:** Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*), Public Prosecutor's Offices Lübeck, Duisburg, Mönchengladbach and Berlin, State Criminal Police Office (*Landeskriminalamt*) of Schleswig Holstein, Bavaria, North-Rhine Westphalia and Berlin.
- **Spain:** National Police (*Policía Nacional*), Investigate Court number 6 in Valencia and Public Prosecution Office Valencia (*Fiscalia Superior de la Comunidad Valenciana*)
- **United Kingdom:** National Crime Agency
- **Albania:** State Police (*Policia e Shtetit*)

- **Emirate of Dubai:** Dubai Police Force (القيادة العامة لشرطة دبي)

For further information: Italian State Police press release [[link to follow](#)]

## EIB approves € 12.6 billion financing for transport, clean energy, urban development and COVID-19 resilience



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- € 3.1 billion for COVID-19 public health and business financing
- € 3.5 billion for private sector investment and working capital schemes
- € 3 billion for clean energy and energy efficiency investment around the world
- € 2 billion for Naples-Bari high speed train link largest loan in EIB history

The European Investment Bank (EIB) today approved € 12.6 billion of new financing for projects across Europe and around the world.

New financing agreed today includes more than € 3.1 billion of COVID-19-related investment to improve public health, strengthen public services and

back investment by companies in sectors hit by the pandemic.

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the EIB has approved € 20.1 billion to enable public and private partners around the world to better tackle health, social and economic challenges.

The EIB Board, meeting by video conference, also backed investment in agriculture, water, housing, telecommunications and urban development across Europe, as well as in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

“Fighting climate change and tackling the COVID-19 pandemic must go hand in hand to achieve a green recovery. The EU Bank is working around the world to help mitigate the impact of the pandemic on lives, jobs and businesses; and to ensure that investment focuses on sustainability, innovation, and on reducing the devastating impact of climate change. The 12.6 billion Euros of new EIB financing approved today show how we are working with thousands of local partners to make a long-term difference to people’s lives during these challenging times”, said Werner Hoyer, President of the European Investment Bank.

### **Largest ever EIB loan to transform travel in southern Italy**

Passengers travelling between Rome, Naples and Bari will from 2027 benefit from reduced journey times, a quicker and environmentally friendly alternative to car transport, and improved connections thanks to the largest loan the EIB ever approved.

The EIB board gave the green light for a EUR 2 billion loan to support the construction of the new high-speed train link that will cut journey times by 1 hour and forty minutes between Naples and Bari. More than 2000 jobs will be created during construction and 200 once construction of the high speed line across a European cohesion region is complete.

The new green transport link, part of the Italian government’s “Unlock Italy” decree, will increase the competitiveness of road transport, reduce carbon emissions and support social and economic development in southern Italy. It is part of the Scandinavia-Mediterranean Trans-European Network (TEN).

### **€ 3.6 billion to help businesses to better withstand COVID-19 challenges**

Ensuring that entrepreneurs and employers can continue to invest and adapt to new challenges posed by COVID-19 is crucial.

Companies in the Baltics, Benelux, Cyprus, France, Italy, Spain, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia as well as East Africa, Morocco, the Middle East and the Pacific will benefit from new targeted COVID-19 financing initiatives approved by the EIB today.

The new schemes, managed by local financial partners and banking intermediaries, will help reduce economic shocks, unlock new investment and enable targeted financing for sectors most vulnerable to COVID-19 uncertainties.



## **€ 3 billion for renewable energy and energy transition**

Today's board meeting agreed to support energy investment that will reduce energy use and increase generation of clean energy across Europe and around the world.

€ 1.6 billion will be used to finance small-scale local climate action projects in France, Italy and across the EU, managed by experienced financing partners.

Financing to support construction of new windfarms off the Dutch coast and in Bosnia, improve energy efficiency in Austria and Ukraine, renovate hydropower in Georgia, roll out smart meters in Lithuania and modernise electricity networks in Madeira and Hungary was also approved.

Millions of people across Africa and Latin America will be able to access reliable clean energy for the first time following EIB support for new off-grid solar schemes and energy transition.

## **€ 2.9 billion to improve urban and national sustainable transport**

Rail transport in Italy is set to be transformed by EIB backed investment to upgrade rolling stock on the national network, alongside today's approval of EUR 2 billion financing for the new high-speed line between Naples and Bari.

The EIB Board also agreed to support new investment to upgrade public transport in Sarajevo and Krakow, and to help improve a key motorway link in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **Improving urban development and social housing**

Thousands of families will benefit from new large-scale social housing investment across France and in Germany under new financing programs approved today.

The EIB Board also agreed to support the New Slussen urban development project that will transform the heart of the Swedish capital Stockholm.

Hospital patients will benefit from EIB support for construction of a new regional hospital in Tournai and approval of a national scheme to improve mental health facilities across Belgium.

A new scheme to support long-term healthcare investment in French regions underserved by medical services was also agreed,

## **Background information:**

The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** is the long-term lending institution of the European Union owned by its Member States. It makes long-term finance available for sound investment in order to contribute towards EU policy goals.

Overview of projects approved by the EIB Board:

<http://www.eib.org/projects/pipeline/recently-approved/index.htm>

Overview of projects approved by the EIB Board of Directors following positive assessment by the EFSI Investment Committee:

<http://www.eib.org/efsi/index.htm>

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## [Virtual high-level meetings in the absence of WIPO General Assemblies in Geneva](#)

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