

Egypt: Remarks by the High Representative / Vice-President Josep



Check against delivery!

Dear Minister [of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Sameh Shoukry], dear friends, thank you very much for your warm hospitality and for the very important meeting that I had the honour and pleasure to have with his Excellency the President of Egypt [Abdel Fattah al-Sisi]. Thank you also for the good meeting we have just had.

I am delighted to be here in Cairo. It is my first visit as High Representative. Coming to Egypt to meet you and with President Sisi and other Ministers and interlocutors was a priority for me. I could not do it before, due to the constraints imposed by the coronavirus. But the coronavirus has only succeeded in delaying my visit. Here we are, trying to enhance our partnership.

This is a good opportunity to bolster this partnership, because we want to strengthen our relations. And we want to do so because we share many interests. We want to consult with you on many pressing regional issues, in the areas of energy, environment, migration, trade and security. We also want to work together in areas that are important for the well-being of the Egyptian people – water management, socio-economic development, education, and health.

In this regard, we spoke about the emergency package of support we prepared to face the consequences of COVID-19, which is hitting you, us and everybody much stronger than expected.

We also discussed how to best handle difficult issues, like human rights. Among friends, we should and we can talk about everything.

Maybe the most important aspects of this visit are the regional issues, because our neighbourhood – the Mediterranean – is in trouble.

We raised the situation in Libya – which I visited earlier this week, and where Egypt is playing a decisive role and I want to thank you for this role in pushing for and keeping the ceasefire in Libya.

On the Middle East Peace Process – and above all the agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, which has prevented the annexation in the Jordan Valley this summer.

I think that we have to continue working on the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, where the current developments are very worrying, and on the need for de-escalation and dialogue.

And finally, although it is a little bit far away from the European Union countries and much closer to Egypt, we are very much concerned and we shared comments and considerations about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, where we welcome Egypt's continued engagement in the negotiations with Ethiopia and Sudan, and we hope that you will continue having this important role in order to use this vital resource for Egypt in an organised way.

Dear Minister [Shoukry], I am very much looking forward to continuing our discussions over lunch and also during your next visit to Brussels.

Q&A

Q. On the developments in Libya, at the political arena and in the field. Could you explain your vision on how the Libyan crisis will be resolved in the future in light of the consultations that took place this morning?

First, I want to praise the important role played by Egypt on the ceasefire. Without the Cairo Declaration this would not have happened. And without the important political pressure that you put, explaining clearly which were the red lines that you were not going to accept to be overpassed, maybe the ceasefire would not have come. This is very good news, because the first thing to stop a war is to stop fighting.

Now, for the time being, it is happening and we want it to last. And it will last according also to the pressure that Egypt and other Arab states will be able to put on both sides, but mainly on one side.

I think that there is a window of opportunity in order for the Libyan people to reach agreements among them – because the solution can only belong to the Libyan people – in order to decide how to organise their future.

We share the same will for every mercenary to leave Libya, to stop the foreign interference in the country, to stop the flow of arms and to give an opportunity to peace.

I think that on that, Egypt has a role that cannot be played by anyone else. Egypt alone will not be sufficient, that is why the European Union is also ready to contribute.

I have been [visiting Tripoli and Tobruk the past days](#). I had a long meeting with [President of the House of Representatives of Libya, Aguila] Saleh and I think that this window of opportunity cannot be lost and I am sure that Egypt and the European Union will work together to keep it.

Q. How concerned are you about the regional interference in Libya? The United Nations yesterday said that the arms embargo is ineffective. There are foreign fighters coming in from Turkey, Wagner mercenaries and 338 cargo flights as documented by the United Nations. On human rights, you talked with Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Soukry as friends; can you tell us more about the human rights issues that you tackled together?

About the arms embargo, it is a reality that the arms embargo is not being fully respected. We can say that it is not respected by anyone.

We, the European Union, tried to do what we can do in order to enhance this arms embargo, using our capacity. We launched [Operation IRINI](#), which is a navy mission that has also a certain capacity of controlling what is happening in that area. The United Nations mandate to control the arms embargo only talks about controlling it by sea and air, which is what we are doing. We have had some success, sending to the United Nations technical bodies information about 500 hailings, which concerns both sides of the conflict. Now it is up to the [United Nations] Security Council to decide what to do with this information.

From our side, we try to control the arms embargo as much as we can, but we are perfectly aware that the flow of arms continues reaching Libya and, as far as this continues, it is going to be quite difficult to stop the fighting.

Of course we have been talking about human rights policy. You know that it is an horizontal policy, it is the line of our external relations, not only with Egypt, but with everybody. I perfectly understand that it is a very sensitive issue, but I think that we have to talk about it, putting on the table our worries and also sharing information. Because sometimes there are some considerations that are not exactly according to reality. I think that we have to continue doing so, every time that there is something that worries us, or every time that in Geneva they decide on a statement that puts things in a way that we disagree. We have to talk about it. That is what we have been doing today.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-194450>

[International Criminal Court:](#)

Statement by the High Representative



The International Criminal Court (ICC) plays an essential role in delivering justice to the victims of some of world's most horrific crimes. Its independence and impartiality are crucial characteristics of the Court's work, which are fundamental for the legitimacy of its judgements.

The sanctions announced by the United States administration on 2 September against two Court staff members, including its Prosecutor, are unacceptable and unprecedented measures that attempt to obstruct the Court's investigations and judicial proceedings.

The ICC must be able to work independently and impartially, free from outside interference. The United States should reconsider its position and reverse the measures it has taken. Impunity must never be an option.

The European Union is unwavering in its support for the universality of the Rome Statute and for the ICC. We will resolutely defend it from any attempts aimed at obstructing the course of justice and undermining the international system of criminal justice.

Press release – Greater EU Civil Protection capacity needed in light of lessons from COVID-19



The EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) has supported member states to save lives in the midst of earthquakes, hurricanes and floods. It has helped fighting forest fires and evacuating EU nationals – including [more than 75.000 EU citizens](#) during the current COVID-19 crisis – by coordinating and assisting in civil protection efforts. Medical equipment such as ventilators, personal protective equipment, vaccines and therapeutics and laboratory supplies have also been procured through [rescEU](#) to support national health services during the pandemic.

However, MEPs believe that while the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was used successfully during the COVID-19 crisis, it also exposed limitations in the current crisis management set-up. When many member states are hit by the same emergency simultaneously they cannot rely on own assets and voluntary support. RescEU must therefore be strengthened to enable the EU to help quickly to fill these critical gaps so no one is left alone to deal with such emergencies.

To take these concerns into consideration, the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Committee today with 72 votes to 6 and 1 abstention, updated its position adopted on [5 March 2020](#).

Preparing for large-scale emergencies

The committee repeated its call from 5 March that a significantly larger amount should be allocated to preparedness, including for the purchase of necessary new rescEU equipment, materials and resources to be better able to assist member states when national capacities are overstretched. This would make it possible to respond swiftly and effectively to large-scale emergencies or to low probability events with a high impact including medical emergencies such as the COVID-19.

To be more transparent about the use of EU funding, MEPs also believe that it is necessary to specify how money is allocated across the three pillars of the mechanism “prevention, preparedness and response”.

Quote

After the vote the rapporteur, [Nikos ANDROULAKIS \(SD, Greece\)](#) said: *“There is a need for more EU solidarity. With our proposals we better protect and assist European citizens, no matter in which member state they reside as we increase the co-financing rate to 100%, improve prevention actions and give the Commission the possibility to acquire, rent or lease the necessary capacities. Parliament is ready to start the negotiations. We want the Mechanism ready to address not only a possible second wave of the pandemic or forest fires but any other natural or man-made disaster in the future.”*

Next steps

The full House will vote during the 14-17 September session after which Parliament is ready to start negotiations with member states to allow for entry into force of the revamped mechanism by January 2021.

Background

The Civil Protection Mechanism was set-up in 2013 to help member states deal with increasingly frequent natural disasters. Until 2019, it was only based on a voluntary system. In 2017 alone, the Mechanism was used 18 times for forest fire emergencies in Europe. Portugal, Italy, Montenegro, France, and Albania all received assistance via the Mechanism to respond to forest fires.

Since 2019, when rescEU was created, the EU can now also directly assist member states hit by disasters when national capacities are overstretched.

**[National human rights institutions:
guaranteeing fundamental rights
compliance during COVID-19 and beyond](#)**



"National human rights institutions are guardians of human rights. But too often, they cannot deliver on their true potential," says FRA Director [Michael O'Flaherty](#). "Governments and Parliaments should free NHRIs from unnecessary constraints and grant them the power and resources they need to do their job properly. As the Coronavirus pandemic affected or limited many rights, it is especially important that we have strong and independent NHRIs to champion people's fundamental rights during and after COVID-19."

NHRIs are independent organisations set up by states to promote and protect human rights within their countries in line with the [United Nations \(UN\) guiding "Paris principles"](#) and [Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals](#).

This new FRA report on [Strong and effective NHRIs: challenges, promising practices and opportunities](#) reviews their situation across the EU, North Macedonia, Serbia and the United Kingdom. It identifies various ways how NHRIs could further promote and protect fundamental rights:

- **Sufficient powers:** NHRIs often have wide mandates. They cover many areas of EU law where the EU's bill of rights, the [Fundamental Rights Charter](#), applies. This includes monitoring fundamental rights, handling complaints, investigating rights violations, advising policy makers, as well as liaising with other rights bodies nationally and internationally. To boost their impact, Member States, both governments and Parliaments, should formally consult NHRIs, follow up on their

recommendations and answer their specific queries.

- **Enhanced role at EU level:** The EU is steadily hardwiring fundamental rights into EU law and funding and could draw further on NHRIs when monitoring the implementation of fundamental rights commitments under EU law, including the EU's legally binding Fundamental Rights Charter. It could also regularly engage with them on fundamental rights issues, such as the rule of law or use of the Charter.
- **Compliance with the UN Paris Principles:** Sixteen NHRIs in the EU are now fully compliant with the UN's guiding principles, up from nine since FRA published its [first NHRI overview in 2010](#). Six other countries have non-compliant NHRIs and the remaining five are creating NHRIs, seeking accreditation and compliance. A European network (ENNHRI) now also supports, strengthens and connects NHRIs. All Member States should draw on such support and ensure their NHRIs are fully compliant with the UN's principles.
- **Protection and independence:** Almost half of the NHRI leaders have legal protection against criminal and civil liability. Thirteen NHRIs reported that their staff faced threats and harassment at work. Member States need to protect NHRIs, their members and staff, including by law, and safeguard NHRIs' full independence to work.
- **Diversity:** Engaging with a wide cross section of society can help raise rights awareness and make NHRIs more effective. This also includes building closer ties with civil society as well as regions and cities.
- **Adequate resources:** Many NHRIs continue to lack staff considering their multiple mandates. Member States should therefore equip NHRIs with the necessary financial and human resources to carry out their mandates effectively.

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[Russia: Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Bo](#)



The European Union condemns in the strongest possible terms the poisoning of the Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The toxicological analysis carried out by a specialised laboratory of the German armed forces proves that Mr Navalny was poisoned by a military-grade chemical nerve agent of the “Novichok” group, developed by the Soviet Union and later, Russia. The use of chemical weapons under any circumstances is completely unacceptable and a breach of international law.

It is essential that the Russian government investigates thoroughly and in a transparent manner the assassination attempt of Mr Navalny. Alexei Navalny’s case must not go unresolved. Those responsible must be brought to justice.

We are grateful to the staff of the Charité – Universitätsmedizin hospital in Berlin for their treatment of Mr Navalny and wish him a prompt and full recovery.

The European Union will continue to closely follow the issue and discuss its implications.