



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2023)0086

The EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders

European Parliament resolution of 16 March 2023 on the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders (2021/2204(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the UN Charter,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Declaration on Human Rights Defenders),
- having regard to the activities of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders,
- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Articles 3 and 21 thereof,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the EU's guidelines on human rights, in particular the Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders (hereinafter also referred to as 'the Guidelines'), adopted in June 2004 and revised in 2008, to the second guidance note on the Guidelines' implementation, endorsed in 2020, and to the Guidelines on Human Rights Dialogues with Partner/Third Countries, adopted in December 2001 and revised in 2021,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief of 24 June 2013,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 23 June 2014 on the 10th anniversary of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/947 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 June 2021 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe, amending and repealing Decision No

466/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Regulation (EU) 2017/1601 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 480/2009¹,

- having regard to the EU strategic framework on human rights and democracy of 2012, and to the 2020-2024 EU action plan on human rights and democracy, as laid out in the joint communication by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission of 25 March 2020 (JOIN(2020)0005), adopted by the Council on 18 November 2020,
- having regard to the Commission’s toolbox of 2021 on a human rights-based approach to international partnerships, as laid out in its staff working document of 30 June 2021 entitled ‘Applying the Human Rights Based Approach to international partnerships – An updated Toolbox for placing rights-holders at the centre of EU’s Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation’ (SWD(2021)0179),
- having regard to its specific guidelines for human rights and democracy actions of MEPs on their visits to third countries,
- having regard to the Statute of the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, adopted by the Conference of Presidents on 15 May 2003 and modified on 14 June 2006,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2021 on human rights protection and the EU external migration policy²,
- having regard to the study of its Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services of 24 August 2022 entitled ‘EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders – European Implementation Assessment’,
- having regard to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,
- having regard to indicator 16.10.1 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which refers to the number of verified cases of killing, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture of journalists, associated media personnel, trade unionists and human rights advocates in the previous 12 months,
- having regard to Article 1(1)(e) of and Annex 3 to the decision of the Conference of Presidents of 12 December 2002 on the procedure for granting authorisation to draw up own-initiative reports,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 June 2010 on EU policies in favour of human rights defenders³,
- having regard to its resolution of 19 May 2021 on the effects of climate change on human rights and the role of environmental defenders on this matter⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 10 March 2021 with recommendations to the

¹ OJ L 209, 14.6.2021, p. 1.

² OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 70.

³ OJ C 236 E, 12.8.2011, p. 69.

⁴ OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 111.

Commission on corporate due diligence and corporate accountability¹,

- having regard to its resolution of 6 October 2022 on the outcome of the Commission’s review of the 15-point action plan on trade and sustainable development²,
 - having regard to its recommendation of 17 February 2022 to the Council and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning corruption and human rights³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 10 March 2022 on the EU Gender Action Plan III⁴,
 - having regard to its resolutions on breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (known as ‘urgency resolutions’) in accordance with Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 February 2022 entitled ‘Human rights and democracy in the world and the European Union’s policy on the matter – annual report 2021’⁵, and to its previous resolutions on earlier annual reports,
 - having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0034/2023),
- A. whereas the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders defines human rights defenders (HRDs) as individuals or groups who act to promote, protect or strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms through peaceful means;
- B. whereas HRDs are essential allies in the EU’s efforts to protect and promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law and prevent conflicts worldwide; whereas it is therefore in the core interest of the EU and its Member States to support their work and protect them;
- C. whereas the Guidelines, adopted in 2004 and revised in 2008, have gradually become the framework of reference for EU institutions, EU delegations, Member States’ diplomatic missions and EU leaders to promote and ensure respect for the rights of HRDs and to protect HRDs at risk of attacks and threats from state and non-state actors; whereas Parliament has consistently called for a proper and coordinated implementation of the Guidelines; whereas the Member States, alongside the EU institutions, should implement the Guidelines, which include a range of specific commitments, such as regular reporting, coordination and action in support of HRDs;
- D. whereas consistent, coherent EU action to support and protect HRDs can have a significant impact when Member States’ missions and EU delegations coordinate their action, notably in relation to individual cases both bilaterally and in multilateral forums;

¹ OJ C 474, 24.11.2021, p. 11.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0354.

³ OJ C 342, 6.9.2022, p. 295.

⁴ OJ C 347, 9.9.2022, p. 150.

⁵ OJ C 342, 6.9.2022, p. 191.

- E. whereas the adoption of the 2012 strategic framework on human rights and democracy and the three successive action plans have provided a vision, principles and actionable measures for the EU's support for the promotion of human rights globally and the implementation of the Guidelines;
- F. whereas the EU has developed a wide range of instruments to support HRDs, from coordination tools to financial aid; whereas the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) was previously the main EU financial instrument used to support HRDs, including through both emergency grants and the EU's HRD protection mechanism, ProtectDefenders.eu; whereas the EIDHR has been replaced by a thematic programme on human rights and democracy as part of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI); whereas respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law is a cross-cutting objective throughout the whole NDICI and is also promoted through the work of the European Endowment for Democracy;
- G. whereas more than EUR 186 million was allocated under the EIDHR to support human rights and HRDs in situations in which they were most at risk during the 2014-2020 period; whereas an indicative amount of EUR 326 million has been earmarked under the NDICI's thematic programme on human rights and democracy to support HRDs and counter the shrinking space for civil society during the current 2021-2027 period; whereas the ProtectDefenders.eu initiative has been allocated around EUR 35 million of EU funding and has supported around 55 000 HRDs since 2015, including 8 700 in 2021; whereas around 1 600 HRDs have been supported under the separate EU emergency grant scheme since 2010;
- H. whereas the European Consensus on Development commits the EU and its Member States to implementing a human rights-based approach to development cooperation, encompassing all human rights and therefore also those who defend them;
- I. whereas the EU, as a powerful economic actor, has the capacity to influence the situation of human rights and HRDs worldwide by integrating a human rights-based approach into all its policies in a consistent manner; whereas the 2021 trade policy review commits the EU to taking a more assertive stance in defending its interests and values, notably the promotion and protection of human rights; whereas the Commission's trade and sustainable development (TSD) review provides for increased monitoring of TSD commitments in trade agreements, a strengthened role for civil society and improved enforcement of these agreements;
- J. whereas the new EU global human rights sanctions regime (EU Magnitsky Act) allows the EU to target serious human rights violations and abuses worldwide; whereas the fate of HRDs should be an integral dimension of the EU's global monitoring of human rights abuses worldwide, including in relation to imposing sanctions; whereas the use of this tool could be enhanced by making it subject to qualified majority voting;
- K. whereas Parliament has repeatedly called for the EU to address acts of grand corruption by individuals and entities through sanctions; whereas HRDs involved in anti-corruption activities are being increasingly targeted for their work; whereas the Council and the Commission have initiated work towards the sanctioning of individuals and entities responsible for corruption crimes;

- L. whereas the consistent, effective and efficient implementation of the Guidelines is even more important in the current global context of declining democracy, the deterioration of human rights, shrinking civil society space, climate collapse and heightened risks for HRDs posed by factors such as digital surveillance and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- M. whereas there has been a substantial increase in the number, range and severity of attacks on HRDs and their families and lawyers in recent years; whereas according to several international organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the number of HRDs killed in 2020 and 2021 respectively varies between 331 and 358, and since under-reporting is common, the actual figure is unknown and is likely to be much higher; whereas a high number of those killed were environmental defenders with more than half of those killings occurring in only three countries, Colombia, Mexico and the Philippines; whereas the number of HRDs killed in Colombia reached a record high in 2022, and was particularly high in the last part of that year; whereas a large number of HRDs are under threat and attack because they have raised concerns about the adverse human rights impacts of business operations, including in the context of large development projects that affect access to land and livelihoods; whereas in recent years, the majority of the HRDs targeted and/or murdered by state and non-state actors were working on land, water, environmental and indigenous peoples' rights;
- N. whereas authoritarian governments, but also a worrying number of long-established democratic countries across the world, including within the EU, are increasingly adopting new kinds of tactics and restrictive measures against HRDs in order to censor their work and silence and harass them; whereas such measures include strategic lawsuits against public participation, restrictive government policies, defamation campaigns, discrimination and intimidation or violence, including killings, abductions, arbitrary arrest and detention; whereas a climate of impunity for violations committed against HRDs is prevailing in numerous countries around the world;
- O. whereas HRDs are increasingly being targeted by authoritarian third-country regimes through embassies, diplomatic missions and staff, law enforcement officials and other proxies on the territories of EU Member States where they have found shelter or asylum;
- P. whereas women HRDs face gender-specific threats and are more at risk of being subjected to certain forms of violence and other violations, prejudice, exclusion and repudiation than their male counterparts, and suffer from a lack of access to adequate resources and protection mechanisms; whereas most under-reported cases relate to those who face gender-specific or sexual orientation-specific barriers;
- Q. whereas attacks against HRDs are increasingly also targeting their families and communities;
- R. whereas other groups and categories of defenders who are particularly exposed to attacks and human rights violations include journalists, those working to promote civil and political rights, notably those investigating or defending victims of state crimes, enforced disappearances or torture, those working to promote economic, social and cultural rights, notably collective rights, such as the right to food and access to natural resources, including trade unionists, those working for community rights, the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, children's rights, the rights of persons with disabilities,

indigenous peoples' rights and LGBTQI+ rights, and those fighting against corruption;

- S. whereas increasingly sophisticated means, including new technologies, are being used to persecute HRDs; whereas HRDs also face restrictions and are sometimes directly targeted by policies, legislation and procedures described as 'security' measures, often combined with stigmatisation and accusations of terrorism;

Overall assessment of the EU policy framework in support of HRDs

1. Praises and thanks all human rights defenders for their courageous and crucial work in defence of human rights and the planet; acknowledges that they have to do their work under increasingly challenging and evolving circumstances and often at a heavy personal cost for them, their families and their communities;
2. Welcomes the EU's policy framework in support of HRDs, which has developed over the past two decades with the Guidelines at its core; underlines the significant impact of the Guidelines in increasing awareness and understanding of the role of HRDs as indispensable and central partners for the EU's foreign, human rights and democracy support policy, and in focusing and enhancing efforts to prioritise and streamline the protection of HRDs across the EU's external action;
3. Highlights the invaluable front-line work in support of HRDs by a number of EU delegations and Member States' missions in third countries, and the substantial and increasing financial support, including direct assistance, provided to HRDs by the Commission under the various instruments;
4. Considers, however, that the overall application of the Guidelines by the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Commission and the Member States has been uneven, largely focusing on reactive measures, lacking a consistent overall implementation of the strategy and being characterised by insufficient visibility of EU action and channels of support for HRDs; believes that an HRD dimension has yet to be integrated into all EU external action in a systematic and consistent manner, including EU country, regional and thematic policy documents and at all relevant levels of EU diplomatic engagement and decision-making, up to the highest levels;
5. Calls for the EU to further strengthen its HRD policy framework through continuous, concrete, consistent and effective action, in particular in its relations with authoritarian regimes and in places with which the EU and its Member States have association, trade, investment or cooperation agreements or where they have substantial commercial, energy, security, migratory or other interests; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that their financial support to HRDs is also matched by sustained EU political engagement with third countries;
6. Calls for the Guidelines to refer to the EU global human rights sanctions regime and for systematic attacks on HRDs to lead to the listing of individuals and entities under this regime; reiterates its request to amend the current EU global human rights sanction regime by expanding its scope to include acts of corruption or alternatively for a legislative proposal to be put forward to adopt a new thematic regime against serious acts of corruption;

Team Europe – working together for maximum impact

7. Calls for the EU to implement a genuine Team Europe approach to HRDs, encouraging those Member States not yet active on HRD issues to develop a dedicated strategy and policy framework, joining forces on the diplomatic and funding fronts and bringing together a broad coalition of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, while also promoting and pursuing the same approach in their bilateral relations;
8. Believes that such an approach, through which all EU institutions and actors, including the EU Special Representative on Human Rights, as well as the Member States, would work together on implementing the Guidelines, would prove effective in helping to counter the global backsliding of human rights and democracy;
9. Welcomes the efforts by many EU delegations and Member States' missions to give visibility and recognition to HRDs, in particular by establishing local human rights working groups with staff from EU missions, proactively reaching out to and holding regular meetings with HRDs, conducting systematic field visits to areas where HRDs are at risk (such as in Mexico and Colombia), developing rosters of diplomats for trial monitoring (for example in Russia), recognising outstanding contributions by HRDs through annual awards (for example in Uganda and Honduras), providing emergency support to HRDs, challenging laws that criminalise HRDs and supporting the development of HRD protection networks; highlights, as an example of a best practice, the innovative #DefendamosLaVida initiative launched by the EU delegations and Member States' missions in Colombia and, most recently, Mexico;
10. Regrets, however, the fact that, owing to the voluntarist nature of the Guidelines, the intensity and quality of EU delegations' engagement with and on HRDs varies considerably from country to country and is in practice largely dependent on the local political context or the individual dedication and political will of the specific EU ambassador or staff in question, or of the officials at the EEAS and Commission headquarters; calls for greater consistency and a strategic overall approach in this regard and for a firm commitment by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) and his office on ensuring the consistent implementation of the Guidelines across all delegations, particularly in the countries where HRDs are most at risk; expects all EU and Member State ambassadors to ensure that their missions effectively integrate support to HRDs across their daily work;
11. Calls for the EU to increase its institutional capacity, both in Brussels and in its delegations, in order to be able to adequately respond to the worsening environment faced by HRDs; calls for more staff, where appropriate, dedicated to dealing with the provision of small grants, notably in the area of emergency assistance, and for more diplomatic support on the ground; insists further on the need to strengthen the human and financial capacity of EU delegations to protect HRDs and coordinate with Member States, as a core task of each mission, particularly in countries where the space for civil society is shrinking; highlights the importance of EU delegation premises serving as a safe place for HRDs to meet, particularly in hostile environments;
12. Is encouraged by reports of improved coordination between EU delegations and Member States in the area of HRD protection, particularly through the practice of burden sharing and joint public diplomacy; remains concerned, however, that less than half of the Member States are actively engaged in this area in practice, as many rely on EU delegations for the protection of HRDs, and that selective engagement remains the

norm; regrets the fact that only a few Member States have adopted their own national HRD guidelines; calls on the Member States to take more active steps to achieve broader and more consistent engagement on the protection of HRDs and to set up their own HRD policy documents, in line with those of the EU;

13. Welcomes the regular training on human rights, including on HRD policy, for staff members working as focal points in both the political and cooperation sections of EU delegations; is, however, concerned by reports that awareness and knowledge of the Guidelines remain inadequate; calls for this training to be made mandatory and expanded; suggests thinking about incorporating EU and Member State commitments on HRDs into the job profiles of relevant staff members of the EEAS, EU delegations and Member State missions, with a view to ensuring a systematic approach on HRDs, so that knowledge on and practices for HRD protection are institutionalised, which thus avoids a person-dependent approach and minimises the effects of staff rotation;
14. Calls for more public engagement by the VP/HR, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights and the relevant Member States' national representatives for the safeguarding of human rights, including with regard to individual HRDs; encourages the VP/HR and the Commissioners to commit to systematically meeting with HRDs during their visits abroad and to raise at the highest level the plight of HRDs under attack, including those persecuted, intimidated, arbitrarily detained or forced to flee their countries, notably through public statements when appropriate; calls on EU special representatives on country and regional situations to engage with national authorities specifically on HRDs;
15. Highlights the importance of continuing to break down silos in EU external relations; welcomes the increased coordination between EU delegations, the EEAS headquarters and the Directorate-General for International Partnerships in relation to urgent HRD cases and crisis situations that significantly affect HRDs; calls for improved coordination on human rights matters with the Directorates-General of the Commission, as well as with relevant EU agencies;

Greater focus on prevention and funding needs

16. Welcomes the EU's substantial and steadily increasing financial contribution to supporting HRDs worldwide, which makes it the lead donor in this regard, as well as its efforts to heighten transparency, flexibility and the development of various programmes to support human rights and the activities and needs of HRDs, including when HRDs work in exile; emphasises the unique role of the civil society-run ProtectDefenders.eu mechanism in providing invaluable practical support for HRDs at risk; urges the Commission to put greater emphasis on communicating these efforts publicly; calls for a qualitative shift to a more holistic and long-term approach aimed at the integral security of whole communities that have mobilised to defend their rights; calls on the EU delegations to facilitate and fund local and regional networks and gatherings of HRDs where they can share experiences, learn from each other's strategies, successes and best practices, and build alliances; welcomes the work of the European Endowment for Democracy and stresses the importance of the EU and its Member States continuing to further strengthen their activities by using flexible financial support instruments to support the activities and needs of activists;
17. Warns of the prevalence of numerous government-organised non-governmental

organisations that present themselves as legitimate civil society organisations and calls on the Commission and the Member States to avoid any promotion or support of or any form of association with these organisations;

18. Condemns the rise in attacks on HRDs' families, communities and lawyers worldwide; stresses that these attacks also occur while in exile and aim, inter alia, to inflict pain, fear, anguish and a sense of vulnerability in order to humiliate and degrade victims and break their physical and moral resistance; reiterates, accordingly, the importance of using the Commission's emergency grants, ProtectDefenders.eu and the crisis facility to increase protection and support for these family members, bearing in mind the diverse family units that exist, and HRDs' lawyers;
19. Underlines the need to invest more in the overall long-term protection and psychosocial welfare of HRDs and their families, including by taking a more preventative approach in order to anticipate serious problems, such as assaults, in addition to implementing reactive measures focused on individuals;
20. Underlines the importance of putting the protection of HRDs at the heart of the EU's political engagement with and diplomatic agenda for third countries by aligning all EU external action in third countries with EU action to protect HRDs and promote their work; calls on the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States to prioritise:
 - the systematic identification of key allies within third-country authorities and institutions,
 - increased financial support for the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions, particularly as regards their capacity to engage and protect HRDs and act independently,
 - the strengthening of domestic legislation and policies on HRDs, in line with the UN framework on HRDs, and legislative and policy frameworks with a view to establishing national protection programmes for HRDs,
 - the promotion of national campaigns, networks and structures to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of HRDs to the protection and promotion of human rights and to effectively support the protection of HRDs,
 - the systematic challenging of laws that criminalise or restrict the legitimate work of HRDs and/or are frequently used to harass and intimidate HRDs, including strategic lawsuits against public participation,
 - efforts to encourage governments to dedicate sufficient funding to the protection of HRDs and refrain from interfering with externally sourced funding,
 - assistance to develop independent mechanisms to address the climate of impunity for violations committed against HRDs, including by investigating complaints of threats or violations against HRDs in a prompt and effective manner,
 - the provision of training for government officials, including police, military and other security officers, as well as members of the judiciary, on the legitimate role of HRDs and their rights,

- the promotion of training for HRDs on matters such as reporting on human rights abuses and attacks on HRDs, local and international legal mechanisms for protection against human rights violations, and procedural rights, including when HRDs face criminal charges for their legitimate activities,
 - the development of a strategy to work for the release of arbitrarily detained HRDs or those in long-term detention, to facilitate regular visits by EU and Member State representatives to HRDs in jail and to provide support for the families and relatives of these detainees;
21. Reiterates its call on the Commission to refrain strictly from providing budget support to third-country governments responsible for widespread violations of human rights and the repression of HRDs; calls on the Commission, conversely, to step up its assistance to authorities genuinely committed to establishing an enabling environment for HRDs; recalls its demand for greater transparency regarding human rights provisions in financing agreements under the NDICI;
 22. Calls for the Commission and the other EU institutions, including the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as for other development and investment banks and vehicles, to develop an approach in which funding is only given to entities that implement a sound and strictly monitored human rights policy and that take a zero-tolerance stance on threats or violence against HRDs, including identifying and assessing adverse impacts in operations, value chains and business relationships, preventing, mitigating or ceasing adverse impacts and providing remediation;
 23. Calls on the EU delegations and Member States' missions to build a genuine and comprehensive dialogue with HRDs in third countries, covering funding, methods for dialogue and the need for diplomatic action, and providing, where possible, the core funding for their activities;
 24. Stresses the importance of joining forces with UN agencies and Special Procedures, particularly the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs; calls for greater follow-up by the EU and Member States on the recommendations related to HRDs made through the Universal Periodic Review; calls for the EU to provide financial and political support for existing regional protection mechanisms for HRDs, including the UN Economic Commission for Europe's Special Rapporteur on environmental defenders, the Escazú Agreement and the Inter-American, African and Council of Europe regional mechanisms on HRDs; calls on the EU delegations and Member States' missions in Geneva and New York to take effective action in response to reprisals by third countries against HRDs for their cooperation with UN bodies and to facilitate HRDs' accreditation and interaction with multilateral forums; further calls on the EU missions in Geneva and New York to play a leading role in promoting and defending human rights gains at multilateral forums, including by pushing back against attacks on the definition of an HRD and by mainstreaming and safeguarding key language on the role of HRDs, both across thematic and country-specific resolutions at the UN; calls for the EU and its Member States, to this end, to ensure that these efforts are consistently prioritised in the annual Council conclusions on EU priorities in the UN human rights forums; welcomes the practical collaboration on HRD cases between EU delegations, Member States' missions and like-minded third countries;

New groups of defenders, new challenges, new solutions

25. Welcomes the recent efforts by EU delegations and Member States' missions in some third countries to reach out to activists who do not match the traditional notion of HRDs; encourages the EU to pursue a broad approach to HRDs, particularly by engaging with and strengthening support for local and grassroots HRDs, especially marginalised and vulnerable HRDs, such as indigenous rights defenders, those operating outside major urban areas or in remote areas and those from vulnerable groups, including women, all of whom are at greater risk of experiencing violence and restrictions; calls for the EU to take advantage of online technologies, where possible and bearing in mind digital security, and enhance coordination on EU missions' efforts and resources to connect with more marginalised HRDs;
26. Stresses the need to carry out a gender-specific implementation of the Guidelines and the need for protection mechanisms with an intersectional and gender perspective; calls on the Commission to prioritise access to protection mechanisms and resources for women HRDs, and provide increased funding to civil society organisations that promote the rights of women and girls, notably sexual and reproductive rights and health;
27. Calls on the EEAS and the Member States to support women HRDs and to adopt, as an annex to the Guidelines, a toolkit providing practical steps to take to enable the EU to better meet the gender-specific threats, needs and challenges of women HRDs worldwide;
28. Stresses that the EU should address climate protection as an integral human rights issue under its HRD policy and step up its action in support of those defending the climate and the environment, especially those environmental and indigenous peoples' rights defenders who are most at risk; highlights the need to integrate HRD issues into EU climate diplomacy and assistance, including by promoting the genuine involvement of HRDs in the implementation and monitoring of climate cooperation programmes, projects and schemes and by vocally addressing restrictions on their effective participation and monitoring activities;
29. Welcomes the issuance of calls for proposals dedicated to supporting LGBTQI+ rights defenders and encourages EU missions to step up their monitoring of and support for activists defending LGBTQI+ rights as an integral part of the EU's HRD policy;
30. Calls on the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States to address the threats against and attacks on HRDs by governmental and non-governmental actors, including businesses or groups acting on behalf of them, criminal groups and armed groups, as well as threats in conflict and transition settings; underlines that it is always the state's responsibility to ensure the safety of HRDs and their ability to work in an enabling environment, including when the threats and reprisals come from non-state actors;
31. Calls for the EU to integrate violence against HRDs into its crisis management policy and provide an effective protection response to HRDs when in need; calls for the EU, in this regard, to draw lessons from the lacklustre European response to the evacuation needs of Afghan HRDs and their families following the takeover of the Taliban; calls, in particular, on the Commission to react more rapidly in sudden crises in which the needs of HRDs are both urgent and massive by both supplementing funding for initiatives such as ProtectDefenders.eu and by reorienting country funding and diplomatic efforts

to help HRD relocation; calls on the Commission and the EEAS to consider HRDs as key actors and partners in any effective and sustainable post-conflict response;

32. Calls on the EEAS, the Commission and the Member States to prioritise the fight against the misuse of surveillance technology to undermine the work of HRDs, particularly through the development of robust national and international legislation; reiterates its call on the Commission to support initiatives relating to the development and dissemination of digital security technologies to empower HRDs by providing secure collection, encryption and storage mechanisms to avoid monitoring by repressive governments, cyberattacks and online harassment;
33. Believes that, in the light of the large and growing number of threats and attacks faced by HRDs who raise concerns about the adverse human rights impacts of some business operations, the EU should coherently integrate the promotion and protection of the rights of HRDs, particularly trade union representatives and defenders of land, indigenous peoples' rights and the environment, into its corporate sustainability due diligence directive and its trade, investment and cooperation agreements and instruments, such as the Generalised Scheme of Preferences; calls for the EU to make more consistent and greater use of clauses in trade and investment agreements that protect human rights, including those on closer monitoring and adequate enforcement of human rights commitments, and to fully utilise human rights conditionality to grant third countries preferential access to its market; considers, moreover, that systematic and widespread attacks against HRDs should lead to the triggering of these clauses or that of the overarching framework agreement with the given country, and in the event of a manifest failure of the national authorities to improve the situation, considers that the Commission should take appropriate measures, including those leading to the suspension of the relevant agreement;
34. Underlines the role of domestic advisory groups (DAGs) in the monitoring of TSD commitments in trade agreements; is concerned about reports that HRDs and environmental rights defenders have been barred from joining DAGs by governments of preferential trade partners; calls for sufficient financial resources and technical assistance to be allocated to DAGs to enable them to properly carry out their tasks;
35. Calls for the EU to align its HRD strategies with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the other international standards in this area; underlines that EU delegations and the Member States should prioritise engaging with the business community, particularly European companies and their subsidiaries abroad, in order to protect HRDs working on matters related to land, extraction, manufacturing and other sectors involving a high risk or numerous reports of human rights violations relating to their activities and to monitor their commercial activities comprehensively; insists, in this context, that EU delegations should facilitate and support HRDs' access to judicial remedy in the EU for violations of their rights;
36. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to ensure that HRDs, notably those working on labour and women's rights, are consistently involved in the civil society monitoring mechanisms attached to relevant EU agreements; requests that the Commission ensure that HRDs are protected from the risks they face in exposing human rights violations;
37. Calls on the Commission to ensure that risks of reprisals and retaliation and other risks concerning violations against HRDs working on business and labour issues are included

in the risks identification and assessment phase of companies' due diligence processes; calls on the Commission to ensure that companies systematically engage with HRDs and guarantee their safe participation;

38. Calls on the Commission to closely monitor the mainstreaming of protection and prevention mechanisms for HRDs within sectoral projects, programmes and investment schemes, at least in the areas most at risk for HRDs, such as land and environmental projects, extractive industries, manufacturing and other risk areas, and across all security-related policies; insists on the importance of Parliament carrying out its oversight role in this regard;
39. Highlights the increasing phenomenon of transnational threats against HRDs by their national authorities or proxies, including in Member States; calls on the Commission and the Member States to identify and tackle these threats within the EU as a priority and as an integral aspect of the Guidelines; encourages the Commission and the Member States to provide foreign HRDs residing in the EU with appropriate financial and other means, including dedicated protection mechanisms, trainings and programmes on cybersecurity and cyber-harassment, in order to enable them to continue their human rights work remotely and without fear of retaliation; calls for increased training and resources to be provided to law enforcement authorities in the EU Member States to facilitate reporting, investigations and attribution of these transnational attacks, and calls for those responsible to be sanctioned; underlines that officials and agents of third countries harassing HRDs in the EU, as well as local enablers, either individuals or entities, should be summoned, exposed and sanctioned;
40. Calls on the Commission to investigate particularly concerning cases of third countries persecuting HRDs in EU Member States by operating unlawful overseas missions representing their domestic authorities without the knowledge or consent of Member State authorities;

Visas and shelter – an important protection tool

41. Notes the improvement of EU support for relocating HRDs at risk and the adoption of best practices in some Member States; notes with regret the fact that many HRDs and their families continue to see their urgent relocation or visa requests denied;
42. Stresses that visas are a key protection tool and that, in order to effectively assist HRDs at risk, the Commission should take a proactive role in the establishment of an EU-wide multi-entry visa scheme for HRDs; believes that, in particular, Member States should facilitate the issuance of visas 1) procedurally, by ensuring that their embassies' and consulates' processes are swift, comprehensible, accessible and achievable, and 2) structurally, by creating a specific category in the EU Visa Code¹ for HRDs at risk and including dedicated instructions in the EU Visa Code Handbook² on granting facilitation procedures to HRDs and their family members; underlines the need to make visa requirements and conditions less stringent for HRDs in need of emergency

¹ Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 establishing a Community Code on Visas (Visa Code) (OJ L 243, 15.9.2009, p. 1).

² Handbook for the processing of visa applications and the modification of issued visas (Visa Code Handbook I) of 28 January 2020 (C(2020)0395).

evacuation; calls for efforts to raise Member State officials' awareness of the particular needs and challenges of applications by HRDs;

43. Calls on EU delegations' human rights focal points to identify and raise particular emergency relocation needs with Member States' missions and make recommendations on the matter; believes that providing space for a 'cooling period' can help HRDs avoid risks; calls on the EEAS to report back annually on the number of emergency visas issued by EU Member States to HRDs;
44. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their provision of temporary protection and shelter for HRDs at risk and their families; highlights initiatives in some Member States and encourages further efforts on relocation, particularly through the involvement of regional and local authorities; welcomes the growing number of shelter initiatives at local level across the EU; calls for the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs to establish special assistance for practical support to facilitate the temporary stay, work and mobility of HRDs and their families in the EU; calls on the relevant EU delegation to follow up on the return and security situation of HRDs should they return to their countries;
45. Calls on the Member States to facilitate the issuance of short-term, multiple-entry visas for HRDs seeking to travel to Europe for advocacy or professional training purposes;
46. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage and facilitate active engagement and consultation with HRDs who have already relocated to the EU on designing and implementing HRD relocation programmes, aid and regional initiatives, according to the specific realities and needs faced by HRDs in third countries;

European Parliament oversight and practical support for HRDs around the world

47. Reiterates its commitment to playing a leading role in shaping and enhancing the EU's action in support of HRDs, notably through its plenary urgency resolutions and debates, the work of its Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI), specifically reports and hearings, its missions to third countries and international and regional organisations and its annual Sakharov Prize, including the work done in tandem with the Sakharov Prize Community; highlights, in addition, the role of individual MEPs in bringing human rights situations of concern and those involving HRDs under attack to the attention of the Commission and the Member States, notably through parliamentary questions, opinion pieces and public events; considers that parliamentary engagement with HRDs and civil society actors is an indispensable dimension of its work on external affairs;
48. Underlines that more transparency on the Guidelines' implementation is needed to improve awareness among HRDs, ensure effective parliamentary oversight and provide greater visibility and protection and clearer, easier and more direct access to the EU human rights focal points in the EU delegations, to EU documents linked to the Guidelines, particularly the guidance note of 2020, to local strategies on HRDs and to clear information on financing for projects and programmes for HRDs;
49. Stresses that, as an integral member of Team Europe, Parliament should be fully integrated into the EU policy on HRDs, including through regular dialogue, when needed in a confidential setting, on key issues and policy developments in relation to the Guidelines, including their future update, as well as through the Commission and

Member States acting swiftly on its requests to initiate targeted sanctions for severe repression against HRDs; suggests that the concerns and recommendations expressed in its urgency resolutions be included in local strategies;

50. Resolves to enhance its promotion and protection of HRDs, particularly through:
 - the adoption of a new European Parliament policy framework on support for HRDs, which would integrate support for HRDs across its work and be based on a ‘do no harm’ approach, promoting the safe use of information and communication technologies in its interactions with HRDs, ensuring safe participation in European meetings and responding to reprisals following HRDs’ interactions with its bodies and forums,
 - more systematic engagement with HRDs by all its relevant bodies, particularly interparliamentary delegations and external affairs committees (Committee on Foreign Affairs, DROI, Subcommittee on Security and Defence, Committee on International Trade), and its President,
 - the organisation of an annual meeting with HRDs by each interparliamentary delegation and the external affairs committees (and other relevant committees),
 - the designation by each interparliamentary delegation of a human rights focal point among its bureau members,
 - the systematic inclusion by interparliamentary delegations or committees within their missions outside the EU of a programme for interaction with HRDs/civil society organisations and, where relevant, the production of a list of HRDs of concern (drawn up in collaboration with DROI and the EEAS) and analysis of the overall situation of HRDs and their interaction with local authorities, to be reported back to DROI,
 - systematic efforts by its missions to meet with arbitrarily jailed HRDs and their immediate family members, or to carry out trial observation, when deemed helpful for HRDs and their family members,
 - an increase in the number of public statements and amount of private and/or public diplomacy by its President and the Chair of DROI, in association with the chair of the relevant interparliamentary delegation, in support of HRDs, in particular Sakharov Prize laureates, finalists and fellows at risk,
 - instructions to the European Parliamentary Research Service to regularly collect and publicise information on the situation and needs of HRDs worldwide, including statements and reports by HRDs;
51. Commits to improving the monitoring of particular HRD cases that it has raised, in particular in urgency resolutions, committee meetings and statements;
52. Resolves to ensure that its key resolutions on human rights, in particular urgency resolutions, are translated into the local languages of the countries concerned and published and distributed accordingly; expects EU delegations in the countries concerned to make such resolutions available on their websites and to follow up systematically with the national authorities and report back to Parliament; calls for a

revision of the 2011 Guidelines for European Parliament interparliamentary delegations on promoting human rights and democracy in their visits to non-EU countries;

53. Calls for more strategic coordination between EU institutions in relation to urgent HRD cases; is convinced that parliamentary diplomacy may prove an effective and complementary mechanism for engaging with third countries on urgent HRD cases; calls for an interinstitutional task force on HRDs to coordinate efforts, particularly in relation to priority HRD cases, that would include the DROI Enlarged Bureau, the Commission, the EEAS and the Chair of the Council Working Party on Human Rights; calls for dialogue between DROI and the working party to be enhanced, including through an annual meeting;
54. Insists that the Commission abide by the interinstitutional agreement and systematically provide a written response to all resolutions by the Committee on Foreign Affairs / DROI, including this one;
55. Regrets the underutilisation of the Sakharov Prize by the EEAS and Member States as a tool for improving the livelihoods of HRDs and of human rights worldwide; calls on the EU missions in Sakharov laureates' countries of origin to engage more effectively with laureates, particularly when they are in danger or imprisoned;

The way ahead: necessary institutional and policy changes

56. Regrets the lack of an in-depth, specific analysis by the EEAS and the Commission of the implementation of the Guidelines since 2008; calls for a comprehensive assessment of EU action on HRDs in the framework of the mid-term review of the implementation of the 2020-2024 action plan on human rights and democracy, scheduled for June 2023; calls for this review to include the identification and dissemination of best practices by EU delegations and Member State missions, and for continuous monitoring of the implementation of the Guidelines, in consultation with civil society;
57. Underlines the need for the Guidelines to be updated in view of the evolving challenges and risks faced by HRDs, particularly digital transformation and threats, as well as to better reflect the groups of HRDs in the current global environment, especially those working on the rights of women and the LGBTIQI+ community, as well as land, environmental and indigenous rights defenders, and the specific risks that these groups face;
58. Stresses that the revision of the Guidelines should also expand the scope of EU engagement with HRDs beyond the traditional interlocutors in capitals to include individuals and groups in hard-to-reach or rural areas and those working to defend the rights of refugees and migrants; considers it time to allow for a broader and more innovative approach to the notion of HRDs that encompasses more fluid and temporary groups, including whistleblowers;
59. Calls for guidance on devising action in the most hostile environments for HRDs and on the means to address structural or systemic human rights issues to be incorporated into the revised Guidelines;
60. Calls for the inclusion of a specific section in the Guidelines on the internal dimension of the EU's action on HRDs, in particular on visas for HRDs (and their families) at

immediate risk and on relocation and shelter, as well as on handling transnational threats from third countries against HRDs; calls for the inclusion of a specific section in the chapter on HRD policy in the annual report on human rights and democracy of the Council and the EEAS dedicated to EU action on this dimension;

61. Recognises that silent diplomacy may be an effective tool to improve the situation of some HRDs in third countries; stresses, however, that EU actors need to be vocal about urgent and serious cases and strike an appropriate balance between private and public diplomacy, particularly when silent diplomacy has proven ineffective; notes, in this regard, the limited recourse by the Commission to public statements, which often remain largely weak in tone and focus primarily on high-profile cases, depending on the level and forum at which they are delivered; calls for the consideration of alternative communication strategies or options when an EU statement is impeded, including possible recourse to media, social media or other forums;
62. Regrets the fact that EU delegations' local strategies are rarely publicly available, which makes it difficult to assess whether and the extent to which local civil society has been consulted and involved in their drafting;
63. Calls on the EEAS and the Commission to improve communication and transparency on the implementation of the Guidelines, such as by publishing the 2020 guidance note, local implementation strategies, other relevant internal documents and the complete list of EU delegation focal points and their contact details;
64. Calls for the human rights and HRD focal points in EU delegations to be merged and for access to these interlocutors to be facilitated for HRDs and other civil society actors; insists that their tasks be clarified and dedicated exclusively to their duties as human rights focal points;
65. Notes with regret that EU delegations are not present in some countries where HRDs face particular risks and danger in conducting their activities; acknowledges that EU delegations' presence in such third countries is essential for the implementation of these Guidelines and for effective engagement on individual urgent and serious HRD cases and other local actions; calls on the EEAS to continue exploring the possibility of establishing an EU presence in all countries with serious human rights concerns;
66. Calls for systematic and strategic monitoring of trial observation in order to improve the overall visibility and outcomes of trial observation by EU missions, and for alternative courses of action to be adopted to support HRDs on trial where trial observation is not possible; calls for the observation of trials for not only emblematic cases, but also less visible and lesser known cases against criminalised HRDs;
67. Calls for the Guidelines to be translated into the local languages of third countries and made publicly available, in an easily accessible manner, on the website of each EU delegation;
68. Calls on the EEAS and the Commission to systematically consult civil society representatives and HRDs prior to any human rights dialogue, for the consultation to be genuine, accessible and inclusive and for these interlocutors to be debriefed thereafter; calls on the EEAS and Commission furthermore to engage in a more results-oriented approach in relation to individual cases and to effectively follow up in between sessions

of human rights dialogues; calls for the systematic inclusion of a civil society segment in any bilateral or regional human rights dialogue; reiterates the need for a systematic and firm EU response to any act of reprisal against HRDs that occurs after they have attended EU events or that is connected to contact with EU interlocutors;

69. Reiterates its call for the Foreign Affairs Council to formulate annual conclusions taking stock of the action of the EU institutions and the Member States on HRDs and setting out strategic commitments for HRDs at the highest level; considers the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Declaration on HRDs to be a particularly opportune moment for the Council to publicly reaffirm its commitment to HRDs and update its policy on the matter;
70. Encourages the VP/HR, in cooperation with the Member States and Parliament, to adopt an annual list of focus countries of serious concern in relation to the plight of HRDs, to be modified according to developments on the ground, which would, inter alia, allow for: 1) a fully coordinated Team Europe practical response on the ground; 2) greater access to resources, particularly under a Team Europe funding facility, for emergency protection and longer-term funding to address the broader institutional and structural human rights context; 3) enhanced local human rights monitoring; 4) dedicated national implementation strategies; and 5) additional resources at headquarters and delegation levels;

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71. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.