

Declaration by the High Representative Federica Mogherini on behalf of the EU on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2018

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The EU supports human rights

On this day, 70 years ago, the Member States of the United Nations came together to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This step brought the world together after the greatest tragedy in human history. We have come a long way since then.

The Universal Declaration has proven to be the cornerstone of international human rights law on which many countries have built a strong and resilient human rights architecture. Today, the number of people living in good human rights conditions is higher than ever in the history of mankind. The Universal Declaration's 70th anniversary is an opportune moment to look closer at how human rights have had an overall impact on our societies.

This is why together with partner countries from different parts of the world, the European Union launched this year the 'Good Human Rights Stories' initiative – showing to the world that promoting and respecting human rights allow our societies to grow stronger and more resilient.

While reflecting on these stories can be a source of hope and optimism, we cannot take human rights for granted. We know the struggles that are still taking place across the world: the human rights violations, the undermining of democracy and the shrinking space for civil society.

Ever since the adoption of the Universal Declaration, civil society and human rights defenders have contributed to the promotion and protection of human rights through peaceful dialogue and building pluralistic democracies.

Around the world, pressure is increasing against freedom of speech, against civic space, through violent attacks, forced disappearances and punitive registration regimes. The EU remains a staunch supporter of civil society and we will continue our efforts to act and speak out against harassment and intimidation of civil society, including women and youth organisations. Support for human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, is at the core of the EU's external human rights policy and one of its major priorities. The EU is the leading worldwide donor to local civil society organisations, providing €2 billion each year, two thirds of the global support.

On this day, the EU also reaffirms its firm commitment to the multilateral human rights system as the platform for the international community to best address human rights violations and to seek accountability, both at international and regional level. By implementing the international human rights framework within our Union, we hold ourselves to the same standards that we expect from our partner countries across the world. This includes our continuous quest to improve the human rights situation at home and abroad.

By doing so, we continue to honour the commitment made 70 years ago, at the heart of which lie the fundamental fact that all human beings are born free and equal, and the notion that we all need to act in a spirit of respect and solidarity.

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