



Reference: B1804

Mr Antonio Tajani

President of the European Parliament
Rue Wiertz, Paul-Henri Spaak 09B012
1047 Brussels

09 February 2017

Dear President Tajani,

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MUST STEP UP ITS SCRUTINY IN THESE CHALLENGING TIMES FOR EUROPE

I would like to extend best-wishes to you on your election as President of the European Parliament and express Amnesty International's desire to work with you and the European Parliament on human rights issues.

As President of the European Parliament, you play a crucial role in promoting the European Union's underlying principles, towards the public and in carrying out the European Parliament's core business of holding the other EU institutions to account on their human rights obligations and commitments. We would like to urge you to champion human rights by speaking out about violations of human rights within the EU and abroad.

We ask that you therefore fully support the overarching human rights ambitions of the EU to '*uphold human rights in all areas of its external action without exception*', including trade, energy, migration, security and development policies. The Parliament has a critical role in ensuring that this commitment is met, through its daily work in all committees and delegations, and in its interactions with representatives from third countries. As we are expecting changes in the global geopolitical order, it is critical that the EU strongly promotes the international human rights system and that the Parliament continues to underline the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

MIGRATION DEALS MUST NOT BE BEYOND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT OVERSIGHT

Mr. President, we would like to bring to your urgent attention the need for increased and more robust scrutiny by the European Parliament on migration issues. We were heartened by your comments during a press conference after your election as President of the EP saying that we 'must not forget those who suffer as a result of economic difficulties', especially in this hard winter. In the same spirit of solidarity, we urge you to fully support the prompt relocation of asylum seekers from Italy and Greece who are facing dire winter conditions and ensure the fair and equal sharing of responsibilities amongst member states.

We regret recent migration agreements between the EU and third countries, such as the EU-Turkey deal, are not compliant with international human rights and refugee law standards. We are gravely concerned regarding the consequences of the agreements with Libya on migration. As President of the European Parliament, we therefore urge you to ensure accountability for policies in the migration field, notably the attempt at externalising migration control and refugee protection, that are being fast-tracked through by the Council and the European Commission, without adequate time for scrutiny by your house and with little or no transparency on the exact content of the agreements. We also strongly encourage you to use your role as President of the EP to ensure the voice of rights-holders and civil society is heard in future EU migration deals, and to prioritise human rights issues, including the rights of migrants and refugees, with your counterparts when visiting third countries.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ARE UNDER THREAT GLOBALLY AND NEED EU SUPPORT

In view of the worrying trend of shrinking space for civil society within and outside the EU, and the current risks human rights defenders (HRDs) face around the world, we encourage you to use your position as president of the EP to give much-needed visibility and support to HRDs. We urge you to set an example for the institutions by meeting HRDs in person in Brussels and in third countries, ensuring HRDs are invited to contribute to EP debates and insisting on concrete follow up on EP resolutions on human rights and on the cases of HRDs who have been the subject of EP resolutions. We also encourage you to make systematic public calls for the respect of human rights worldwide including the release of prisoners of conscience and detained human rights defenders and for the halting of executions.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MUST NOT NEGLECT ROLE OF PROTECTING RIGHTS WITHIN THE EU

Protecting the people in the territory of the EU is rightfully one of the European Parliament priorities. Providing security and protecting human rights are not conflicting but complementary and mutually reinforcing goals.

We note that fast-tracking procedures used both by EU member states and EU Institutions to adopt counter-terrorism measures limit the time for careful consultation with human rights and other experts. This inevitably has a negative impact on the quality and human rights compliance of legislation and policy. The draft Directive on Combating Terrorism will soon be put to a final vote in EP and we urge you to consider further amendments to address human rights concerns raised by us and several other human rights organisations. As highlighted in our recent counter-terrorism report¹, Amnesty International is gravely concerned about how recent counter-terrorism measures adopted in several EU countries are disproportionately applied and implemented in a manner that discriminates against specific ethnic and religious communities. Indeed insisting on final robust review of this flawed draft legislation could serve as a litmus-test of your resolve to push back against the trend of fast-tracked ill thought through legislation which attempts to circumvent proper oversight.

Discrimination itself remains a key human rights concern across the EU, particularly as extremist views and hate crime are on the rise. We call on you, as President of the European Parliament, to lead by example and to speak out against racism and promote diversity. It is further imperative for the European Parliament to continue to hold the European Commission and the Council to account with regard to their response to serious threats to human rights and rule of law in member states.

I would very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss our human rights concerns with you in person. We should be grateful to know when a convenient time would be.

Yours sincerely,



Iverna McGowan

Head of European Institutions Office and Advocacy Director
Amnesty International

¹ Dangerously disproportionate: the ever expanding national security state in Europe (EUR 01/5342/2017) available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur01/5342/2017/en/>