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To members of the European Parliament

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EP report on fundamental rights in the EU - Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch ahead of vote in plenary

Dear member of the European Parliament

We are writing ahead of tomorrow's vote by the Parliament on its annual resolution on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union (Louis Michel report).

This annual report of the European Parliament is essential to hold EU institutions and member states accountable for their action in protecting and promoting human rights within the EU's borders and jurisdiction. It is also essential to complement the Parliament's annual report on human rights in the world and support its strong call for "consistent and exemplary" EU internal policies "in order to maximise the EU's credibility globally and the effectiveness of human rights policies" (see *Annual Report on Human Rights in the World and the European Union's policy on the matter, including implications for the EU's strategic human rights policy (2011/2185(INI))*).

This year's report is particularly important in light of the ongoing debate at EU level on how to strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights in the EU. The Parliament has traditionally been the most outspoken EU institution to denounce human rights violations and the erosion of the rule of law in member states. It has played an important role in scrutinising EU legislation and challenging the EU's policy on human rights, including its failure to properly enforce respect for human rights and the rule of law in member states. The strong resolutions on Hungary and European complicity in the CIA rendition and secret detention programmes in particular have, for example, demonstrated the Parliament's critical role as a guardian of human rights and the rule of law within the EU.

The draft report (already adopted by the LIBE Committee) builds on this important record: it provides a much needed critical assessment of the human rights record of the EU and its member states; it puts forward initial ideas on how to address some of the shortcomings and strengthen the EU's response to its internal human rights challenges.

Thursday's vote is an opportunity to demonstrate the Parliament's active engagement in the ongoing debate on the EU's internal human rights policy. The Parliament must not shy away from reminding the EU and its member states of their joint responsibility to respect and promote the founding values of the EU, including respect for human rights.

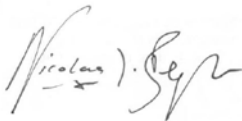
Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch therefore call on you to support the Louis Michel draft report as a positive step towards greater accountability for human rights at EU

level; to reject any amendments that would undermine the report's factual assessment of the human rights challenges facing the EU; and commit the European Parliament to continued active engagement in the debate beyond its current term.

Our organisations strongly believe that the next step is for all EU institutions and member states to adopt a **comprehensive internal human rights strategy** to guide EU action on the internal front, committing them to a shared and indivisible responsibility for implementation, similar to their commitment in the field of EU external relations. Only a clear human rights strategy will eventually enable the EU to comprehensively confront its own challenges, identify the existing protection gaps and articulate effective responses to prevent and remedy ongoing abuses of human rights happening across the EU.

This is the last annual report on fundamental rights in the EU to be adopted by this Parliament. On this occasion, we call on you to leave a solid legacy firmly in support of strengthening human rights and the rule of law in the EU.

Yours sincerely



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