

**Federica Mogherini**

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Vice President of the European Commission  
European Commission  
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1049 Brussels

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



**European Institutions Office**

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Dear High Representative Mogherini,

**HUMAN RIGHTS AS A COMPASS FOR EU EXTERNAL ACTION: LOOKING AHEAD**

Amnesty International welcomes you to your new role as High Representative / Vice President of the Commission (HR/VP). We were encouraged to hear of your willingness to engage with Amnesty International Italy, and look forward to continuing this dialogue on human rights with you at the European Union (EU) level through our Brussels office. We appreciate your statement during the European Parliament (EP) hearings that human rights will be one of your overarching priorities, and will be used as a compass to direct all EU external action. We strongly greet your explicit emphasis on the significance of the EU's commitment to promote human rights in all areas of external action 'without exception'.

As HR/VP, you are in a key position to engage as a champion for human rights at home and abroad. The EU and its member states have tools with great potential to protect and promote human rights — the challenge will be to use these tools fully, strategically, and with the ambition to prioritise human rights whenever and wherever the EU acts.

With regards to human rights at home, we would invite you to refer to our letter addressed this week to your colleague Vice-President Timmermans. We would ask you to support our call outlined in the letter for a comprehensive EU internal human rights strategy. We would also ask that you use the opportunity of the new structure for the Commission, and your role as Vice President, to engage other Commissioners on human rights, and use every opportunity to promote stronger, coordinated action across the Commission's portfolios on human rights at home and abroad.

Amnesty International welcomes your commitment to balance assertiveness and diplomacy in order to achieve human rights impact in third countries. In seeking this balance, choices between the many ways the EU and its member states can engage must be led first and foremost by that which best promotes and protects people's human rights. We also welcome an enhanced and more vocal role for the EU Special Representative for Human Rights. At this year's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Convention against

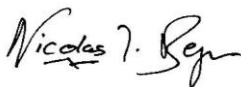
Torture (UNCAT) in December, we look forward to building on your positive commitment to work to stop torture. We urge you to take an explicit, public position at the UNCAT anniversary to re-commit the EU and its member states to intensify work under the UNCAT and the EU Guidelines on Torture, and to ensure the Optional Protocol to the UNCAT is finally ratified by all EU member states. In parallel, we look forward to your collaboration with civil society to work toward moratoria and the abolition of the death penalty worldwide.

In the face of multiple crises today, international human rights and humanitarian law must underpin the EU's policies towards the Middle East, Ukraine, Central African Republic, Somalia, and South Sudan. Strong EU support for international justice and the International Criminal Court must be complemented by a coherent approach to all crises, placing accountability for human rights violations and a holistic approach to justice at the centre of EU efforts. Today, the EU and its member states face the challenge of engaging on human rights more substantially and strategically with key partners such as China, Russia, and the United States. Amnesty International welcomes your commitment to reassess relations with these partners, and urges you to place human rights at the centre of this reassessment. The EU's approach towards these partners will be the litmus test for all of its other action on human rights worldwide.

Above we have outlined some of the many pressing challenges regarding EU human rights foreign policy; we look forward to working with you on these challenges. Indeed following your positive engagement with civil society in your role as Italian Foreign Minister, we would value hearing your ideas on how we could all work together more closely across the EU, member states, and non-governmental organisations on these human rights concerns. Discussing and working to realise human rights priorities will be vital to empower civil society, in particular human rights defenders (HRDs), in line with commitments in recent Council Conclusions. Bringing human rights more explicitly into the Foreign Affairs Council's discussions and positions will likewise be essential to boosting EU engagement on human rights in third countries.

We look forward to meeting you in the near future to discuss human rights concerns and priorities, and to look ahead to the most effective, impactful, and strategic form of EU action to protect and promote human rights.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Nicolas J Beger

Director

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