

4. EU financial engagement: In line with the August 2013 Council conclusions, the EU's bilateral assistance to Egypt was directed to the socio-economic sector and support to civil society. The EU's cooperation in Egypt aims to support Egypt's 'Sustainable Development Strategy – Vision-2030'. EU-supported projects in Egypt contributed to the promotion and protection of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights through global and bilateral means of implementation. In 2021, the EU delegation managed 30 projects worth EUR 19.8 million in support of human rights through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, thematic lines supporting CSOs, and the European Neighbourhood Instrument. Activities included the fight against all forms of discrimination, as well as advancement of the rights of women including the fight against female genital mutilation and violence against women, the rights of the child, migrants and persons with disabilities, freedom of religion or belief, access to justice, culture and cultural diversity. A project in support of the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR), implemented by GIZ, was successfully completed at the end of 2021. It helped introduce a digital complaints system for citizens, strengthen the capacity and conduct trainings for NCHR staff and run human rights awareness-raising activities across Egyptian Governorates.

5. Multilateral context: At the 46th UN Human Rights Council session, Finland led a Joint Statement on behalf of 31 states expressing deep concern about the trajectory of human rights in Egypt (12 March 2021). Egypt was cited in a Group Statement of 26 EU Member States under Item 4 at the 48th Human Rights Council session in 27 September 2021, which, *inter alia*, reiterated the EU's call on Egypt to release all detained human rights defenders.

State of Israel

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Israel is a democracy with independent institutions, robust checks and balances, a free democratic media landscape and 'basic laws' enumerating fundamental rights. A general election took place in March 2021 in line with international standards, with a slightly lower voter turnout overall in comparison with the elections in 2020 (while the turnout among the Arab population saw a decrease of 20 percentage points, despite the fact that Arab constituents' issues of concerns had featured dominantly in the election debates). The new multi-party coalition government, for the first time supported by an Arab Israeli party, was sworn in in June 2021 and pledged to work to reduce the political polarisation in the country.

Israel has expanded rights for LGBTQI persons by introducing legislation allowing same-sex couples, single men and transgender people to become parents through surrogacy.

Many human rights NGOs, mainly those active on Israel's responsibilities as an occupying power in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), have throughout 2021 continued to raise concerns about restrictions to their work. In October 2021, the Israeli Ministry of Defence designated six Palestinian CSOs as terrorist organisations. The designations have far-reaching consequences for the organisations in political, legal and financial terms and raised concerns among CSOs, international organisations, the EU and its Member States on the shrinking space for civil society.

Other issues of concern included the alleged use of cyber surveillance software by the police against Israeli human rights defenders, activists, journalists and decision makers without legal

consent (an investigation was launched following the allegations), the discrimination against Arab minorities in Israel, including the Bedouins in the Negev, and asylum seekers, especially from Eritrea and Sudan. Tensions between Jewish Israelis and Arab Israelis increased, including with violent incidents at the time of the escalation in May 2021.

In the occupied Palestinian territory, the situation remained very challenging, with continues settlement expansion, an increase in settler-related violence against Palestinians, evictions of Palestinian families and continued demolitions of Palestinian residential properties. Concerns persist over the increasing use of arbitrary administrative detention and the detention of Palestinian minors even though the number of detentions declined by 8 percent. An armed conflict between Israel and Hamas took place between 11 and 21 May 2021, leading to 253 Palestinian and 13 Israeli casualties.

2. EU action - key focus areas: As in previous years, the EU focused on five priority areas: Israel's responsibilities as an occupying power; children and armed conflict; upholding democratic values; situation of the Arab minority; asylums seekers, migrants and foreign workers.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: Throughout 2021, the EU Delegation to Israel hosted several meetings and activities with EU Member States and Israeli counterparts on a wide range of human rights issues. The EU delegation conveyed EU positions regarding specific draft legislative initiatives and matters of concerns in bilateral meetings with Israeli authorities, for instance on the far-reaching use of administrative detention.

The EU delegation and EU Member States marked the International Human Rights Day 2021 with a series of events, including a session for Heads of Missions on the changing legal paradigm on international humanitarian law and human rights law in the oPt with invited legal scholars and think-tanks. In order to amplify the EU's human rights and democracy public diplomacy, the EU delegation hosted or initiated several events throughout 2021. Examples include an event focusing on violence against women in the Arab community and a visit to the Beth Dror shelter for LGBTI youth at risk, among others.

The EU delegation has continued to convene the Human Rights Working Group with EU Member States to raise pressing human rights and democracy issues and coordinate potential action. Throughout 2021, the working group has had a wide range of briefings by CSOs and events, such as a visit to an unrecognised Bedouin village in the Negev.

4. EU financial engagement: In the framework of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the EU continued the implementation of eight projects and contracted four new ones, with over ten CSOs, including universities. The main fields of activities were issues related to social cohesion and quality of services in mixed cities and/ or within the Arab community in Israel, workers' rights and women's rights, the rights of transgender persons and the responsibility of the Israeli State in ensuring human rights compliance when using artificial intelligence. In the implementation of the projects, the EU had to deal with challenges related to the escalation in May between Hamas and Israel, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Multilateral context: As of June 2021, no international staff is present in the OHCHR office in the oPt, following Israel's decision to suspend ties with the organisation in February 2020. Resumption of cooperation with OHCHR and the renewal of visa for international staff of OHCHR in the oPt remains a priority of EU action.

In light of the escalation in and around Gaza in May, an open-ended international investigation into war crimes and violations of international law on both sides during the conflict was set up, pursuant to the UN Human Rights Council Resolution S-30/1 of 27 May 2021. EU Member States sitting on the Council voted against or abstained on the Resolution⁵.

On 3 March 2021, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court announced the initiation of investigation with respect to the situation in Palestine*, covering crimes that are alleged to have been committed since 13 June 2014.

The human rights situation in the oPt is also regularly addressed through EU statements in the UN Human Rights Council.

Jordan

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Jordan is a constitutional monarchy committed to the rule of law, democracy and the respect of human rights. In 2021, while the overall situation remained largely positive, the country experienced challenges with regard to the freedoms of expression and association, gender-based violence and gender equality. In some instances, participation in peaceful demonstrations and protests resulted in detentions. There is need to strengthen civil society and widen the civic space. In June, King Abdullah II appointed a Royal Committee to Modernise the Political System, tasked to improve political participation through the empowerment of women, youth and political parties. In October, the committee presented its proposals regarding revisions to the elections and political parties' laws and related constitutional amendments, which the government passed to the parliament for deliberation and adoption in 2022, including additional amendments over security, foreign policy and religious affairs. The ongoing revision of the Law on Associations has raised concerns about the risk of additional restrictions to the operation of civil society organisations. In a difficult regional context, Jordan continued to play a constructive and effective role in support of multilateral solutions and a rules-based order. Jordan continued to be the second largest host country of refugees per capita in the world. The people and authorities of Jordan continued to demonstrate commendable generosity in providing support to refugees, including via the COVID-19 vaccination coverage and the issuing work permits in selected sectors to Syrian refugees.

2. EU action - key focus areas:

Protecting and empowering individuals: The EU co-chaired the Gender Partners Coordination Group with UN Women and the Jordanian Commissioner for Women, developing and aligning advocacy messages raised with ministries and with the Chair of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Women's Empowerment. On the "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence", the EU and Member States organised a series of events and a public awareness campaign. The EU promoted positive gender roles in the media, municipal leadership and

⁵ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/ensuring-respect-for-international-human-rights-law-and-international-humanitarian-law-in-opt-and-israel-human-rights-council-30th-special-session-resolution-a-hrc-res-s-30-1/> Against: Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany / Abstaining: Denmark, France, Italy, Netherlands, Poland

*This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.