

The EUDEL continued its active engagement with local and international human rights CSOs. The EU Special Envoy for Myanmar engaged with a wide range of stakeholders in the pro-democracy movement, with Myanmar's neighbours and the wider region and closely collaborated with other Special Envoys for Myanmar, in particular the UN and ASEAN Envoys.

4. EU financial engagement: The EU continued with its strict policy since the 2021 coup to channel all cooperation exclusively through civil society, international NGOs and UN agencies. All support to government remained suspended. Over EUR 40 million cooperation funds under implementation in 2024 directly contributed to strengthening the EU's human rights priorities in Myanmar.

5. Multilateral context: The EU remained an active voice on Myanmar in various UN fora. The EU led the resolution on the human rights situation in Myanmar at the UNHRC and co-sponsored the resolution on the situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar at the UNGA Third Committee. The EU also collaborated closely with the ILO in view of the Commission of Inquiry on Myanmar's violations of Convention 87 of Freedom of Association in Myanmar, and whose case remained high on the agenda in Geneva throughout 2024. The EU and its MS continued their financial and political support to the International Investigative Mechanism on Myanmar (IIMM) to bolster their investigations into allegations of international crimes and violations of international law.

Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Although Nepal has successfully conducted two elections under the federal constitution, legislative arrangements to implement federalism effectively are still awaited. Political representation of women is generally low with two ministers and one junior minister in a cabinet of 25 members. Although the constitution's quota requirements have referred to 33% women representation in parliament and 40% in local governments.

18 years after the signature of the peace agreement, the long-awaited amendment to the Bill on Transitional Justice, was adopted in August 2024. However, there are concerns that the law makes the TJ process reparations-centred and lacks important provisions that could ultimately provide justice for victims. The selection process of members of the two commissions that are crucial in the implementation process was criticised.

Civil society representatives have noted that obtaining official approval for democratic protests has become more difficult and the National Cyber Security Policy (August 2023) presents critical risks for human rights. Invoking the Electronic Transactions Act 2006, the authorities have arrested individuals who criticised political leaders online. Rights of women, Dalits, minority groups, as well as persons with disabilities and migrant workers remain a concern. Instances of GBV have increased in the aftermath of natural disasters. Nepal has taken major steps forward as regards the rights of persons belonging to the LGBTI community and is the second country in Asia to recognise same sex marriage after Taiwan.

2. EU action - key focus area: The EU was involved in measures aimed at improving access to justice with a focus on combating impunity, supporting HRDs, protecting people and

promoting equality – including the continuation of the EUDEL’s project on storytelling and digital documentation of survivors of the armed conflict. Moreover, the EU supported the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda with the support to implement the National Action Plan (NAP) – II on the UNSC Resolutions 1325 and 1820.

Another key focus area was the promotion of socio economic rights and inclusion with a focus on gender equality and social inclusion and promotion of rights-based approaches: the EUDEL in partnership with four UN agencies – ILO, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women – is implementing a gender equality programme entitled ‘Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal’. The project focusses on combating GBV, advancing socio-economic capacity of women and strengthening their leadership capability. The EUDEL also supported a CSO project on youth. The EUDEL together with the Finnish Embassy continued responding to the needs of water and sanitation in two provinces of Nepal by promoting a human rights-based approach. Sectoral support in the areas of nutrition, education, and green and resilient agricultural production have helped to foster socio-economic rights of the public. A number of projects focusing on renewable energy and energy efficiency have contributed to ensuring safe, and quality housing.

The EU also focused on strengthening public space and the rule of law – especially by promoting civic space and the effective role of CSO’s, freedom of expression and independent media, encouraging access to information and transparency and supporting Nepal’s adherence to fundamental human rights. The EU has continued to provide support to promote Nepal’s compliance with international and national human rights commitments. An ongoing project on electoral reform has contributed to systemic changes and practices to promote equal rights to all. A partnership with the federation of Nepali and international non-governmental organizations has strengthened CSO’s voices, facilitating an environment for them to work more efficiently. An ongoing federalism support programme along with general support to the federalism agenda in cooperation projects have also contributed to promoting rule of law and good governance. Two media projects funded by the EUDEL continue capacity building of journalists, contributing to create an inclusive and conducive environment for independent media. The EUDEL also organised TED Talk –inspired talks by youth activists on a variety of human rights issues, combining youth and human rights perspectives.

As part of the multi-country initiatives of the INTER PARES programme, the EU has extended collaboration with the federal parliament of Nepal to enhance effectiveness of the parliamentary processes including budgeting, law making, oversight, as well as gender and inclusion. The collaboration is foreseen to become operational in 2025.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: the EU does not have a **Human Right Dialogue** with Nepal - however issues related to human rights, good governance and democracy are addressed in the annual Joint Commission. The EU Delegation together with EU Member States follow up consistently and in coordination with like-minded partners and relevant stakeholders in Nepal to encourage the adoption of the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons and Truth and Reconciliation Commission amendment Act, instrumental to a successful conclusion of the TJ processes. The amended law represents a breakthrough in terms of the 18 years of political stalemate over the TJ processes in Nepal. Continuation of this collaboration will be important for facilitating effective implementation of the law, including the maintenance of a victim-centred approach.

4. EU financial engagement: At the close of 2024, EUDEL Nepal had a portfolio of EUR 2.5 million dedicated to human rights, including a contract with provisions for TJ support. The EUDEL's portfolio with dedicated support to CSOs amounted to EUR 3.5 million, while the gender-specific and rights-focussed project has a budget of EUR 15 million.

Moreover, EUDEL has a human rights-sensitive budget support and/or projects in education (EUR 52.5 million), nutrition (EUR 25 million), water and sanitation (EUR 10.5 million), as well as energy (EUR 7 million) and other 'green' areas, comprising climate change resilience and circular economy (EUR 28.5 million).

5. Multilateral context: The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal was able to retain its 'A' status in 2024 after providing assurances that it was addressing concerns raised by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. In order to enable the NHRC to pursue its role more effectively and remain as a credible national institution for the protection and promotion of human rights, the EUDEL has signed a project with the NHRC in 2024. This project aims at supporting the enactment or amendment of laws and policies from a human rights perspective; and an institutional shift by enabling the NHRC to fulfil its mandates with better investigation, more effective monitoring of conventional and emerging human rights issues, and strengthened collaboration and support to TJ mechanisms and processes. The NHRC in September 2024 organised the International Conference on Gender Inclusion in National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions.

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Overall, human rights, the state of democracy and rule of law showed a deteriorating trend, in particular in the fields of freedom of expression, right to peaceful protest, access to information and freedom of religion or belief.

The much-delayed general elections, which ultimately took place in February 2024, only amplified the overall perception of political volatility and polarisation in the country. The EU issued a statement noting the lack of a level playing field due to the inability of some political actors to contest the elections, restrictions to freedom of assembly, freedom of expression both online and offline, restrictions of access to the internet, as well as allegations of severe interference in the electoral process, including arrests of political activists. The EU called on Pakistani authorities to ensure a timely and full investigation of all reported election irregularities⁶¹. A general stalemate between the winning ruling coalition and the main opposition party of the imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan continued throughout the year having a negative impact on the country's stability.

Women's participation in politics slightly increased. In 2024, 12 women were elected to the National Assembly. Women participation in the economic life of the country remains low despite government's programmes to promote women's entrepreneurship. Moreover,

⁶¹ HRVP statement on behalf of the EU issued on 9 February 2024, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/02/09/pakistan-statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-the-general-elections/>