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Press release | 07.12.2020

Human Rights: EU sanctions regime agreed

Quotes from Hannah Neumann & Heidi Hautala

Today, EU Foreign Ministers adopted a new global human rights sanctions regime, ahead of Human Rights Day on 10 December. The mechanism, as long called for by the Greens/EFA group will allow targeting individuals who breach human rights, independently of any geographic restriction.

Hannah Neumann MEP, Greens/EFA Vice-Chair of the Human Rights Committee, comments:

"The new sanctions mechanism is a big success, the European Parliament, and our group in particular, have repeatedly called for the adoption of such a regime. Our efforts now have finally paid off. With the mechanism, the EU will have a toolbox at its disposal allowing targeted, smart sanctions, such as asset freezes or travel bans. As Greens/EFA we would have preferred the sanctions mechanism to make decisions with a qualified majority possible. In the past, we have seen the EU Member States wield their veto powers on the basis of their national preferences. I regret to see that the Council held on to the unanimity procedure for any future listings. A qualified majority vote would have allowed for faster and more efficient decision-making in urgent human rights matters. To make the mechanism more easily applicable in future, the qualified majority vote should become the norm."

Heidi Hautala MEP, Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for Human Rights and Democracy, comments:

"The mechanism will make it possible to impose sanctions on individuals and entities, independently of any geographic restriction. With the sanctions mechanism, the EU shows its commitment to human rights and the fight against impunity. This is a very positive outcome. The EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime reminds us that it is not only human rights that are inherently universal, so is the duty to defend them. The new regime must be governed by the rule of law. All decisions on sanctioning individuals or entities must be taken in a transparent manner, based on information that is readily available. Should those listed feel it just to challenge the sanctions, they must have effective means to do so."

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