

## HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE EU-INDIA RELATIONSHIP

- The 2020 EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025 aims at strengthening EU-India dialogue mechanisms and addresses a breadth of interrelated topics.
- The partnership is rooted in "shared values of freedom, democracy, pluralism, the rule of law, equality, respect for human rights".
- The EU's foreign policy is rooted in the promotion of human rights, as enshrined in Article 21 TEU.
- European Parliament Recommendation (2021/2023(INI)) of 29 April 2021 headed by AFET standing rapporteur on India Alviina Alametsä problematizes the crumbling rule of law and human rights situation in India.

### TRADE

The EU and India are negotiating a free trade agreement, yet there are concerning developments.

- On 24 January, Hindenburg research found that the Indian conglomerate **Adani Group** has engaged in **serious market manipulation and accounting fraud** over the last decades. Previous research has identified close ties to and **favoritism by the Modi government**.
- On April 12, a coalition of 10 NGOs published a joint statement on **human rights concerns in the EU-India Free Trade Agreement**, urging the EU and India to put strong commitments on TSD and all human rights at the core of their negotiations.
- On April 17, **Russia** announced they are negotiating a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India** to strengthen economic ties between the two countries and **expand trade relations**.
- An investigation reported in the 'Financial Times' finds that **Indian oil company** Gatwik drastically **increased its imports of Russian oil** since Russia's unlawful invasion of Ukraine. MEPs have questioned the Commission whether the **EU is inadvertently buying Russian oil** when it imports from India.

### G20

India is chairing the G20 in 2023, but there are serious concerns that it is using the Summit to whitewash human rights abuses, and is not able to steer it towards solutions for global challenges.

- On March 2, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that no joint communique was issued after the G20 Foreign ministers meeting in Delhi due to **irreconcilable differences** on the **Russia-Ukraine conflict**.
- The **UN Special Rapporteur** on Minority Issues, Fernand de Varennes, condemned **G20 summit meetings in Kashmir** as an attempt to **legitimize human rights abuses** and project a false image of normalcy.
- At least **1,600 homes have been broken**, and about **260,000 are homeless** in India's capital, after **four major demolitions** over three months, with notices often served as demolition squads moved in. This is in the context of a "beautification" plan for Delhi, as it prepares for **G20 summit meetings** scheduled on 9 and 10 September.

### DEMOCRACY

- The 2023 report released on March 3 by the Swedish Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute ranked India as an "**electoral autocracy**".
- In March, India convicted and **disqualified its main opposition leader**, Rahul Gandhi, for defamation of Modi. 96% of sedition cases after 2014 have been against citizens **for criticizing the government**.
- India has slipped to rank 161/180 in the **Press Freedom Index 2023**.
- India **curtails** and increasingly criminalises the operation of **reputed civil society organizations**. In April, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) recommended a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into **Oxfam India** and filed a case against the Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment (LIFE) for alleged violations of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).

### RULE OF LAW

Vigilante violence, extrajudicial demolitions and extrajudicial killings suggest a breakdown of rule of law in India. For a full list, see here.

- **Lynchings** by vigilante groups take place with impunity on a daily basis, suggesting a breakdown of the rule of law. For example, on February 14, **two Muslim men were allegedly kidnapped and burnt alive** in Haryana by members of the Hindu supremacist Bajrang Dal on the pretext of cow slaughter.
- Churches, mosques, and other religious sites are **demolished by vigilante groups and the government**. For example, three churches in Manipur, India, were demolished by the administration for **alleged illegal construction** on government land.
- On April 7, Adivasi people in the Bijapur district of Bastar, in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh, were targeted by an **aerial bomb attack**. This attack is the 4th in 3 years and **grossly violates the right to life of indigenous peoples**.
- In response to the **Manipur riots**, the state government has imposed a curfew, shut down internet services for five days, and issued "**shoot-at-sight**" orders. More than **50 people were reportedly killed** and around **50,000 displaced**.
- **Demolitions of homes in Kashmir** follow a surge in demolitions that violate due process across India, colloquially called "**bulldozer raj**". In June 2022, three United Nations Special Rapporteurs condemned demolitions across India, which they allege **deliberately target Muslims** through "collective punishment".

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Convene a joint hearing with the Human Rights Subcommittee (DROI) on human rights in India.
- 2 Convene a delegation from among D-IN members to conduct a human rights visit to India.
- 3 Issue a press statement as D-IN expressing concern about one of the recent issues listed above.

## FURTHER READING

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