



IECLO

International & European
Criminal Law Observatory

ON CULTURAL ISSUES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY

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UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

[Testing swift responses to chemical terrorism threats](#)

The UN Security Council has met to discuss the ongoing threat of ISIL/Da'esh. A specialized UN agency that has been helping Indonesia prepare for chemical terrorism attacks through realistic simulation exercises to find a coordinated response to the complex and tangible threat of chemical terrorism.

The exercise in Semarang, Indonesia simulated a chemical attack on a train and highlighted the need for quick and effective responses and passengers simulated the symptoms of exposure as emergency teams, dressed in protective suits, responded by searching for bombs and providing medical assistance, part of a series of exercises organized by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Indonesian National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT), with the support of the National Police Mobile Brigade.

Chemical terrorism has occurred at least eight times in Indonesia since 2011, where terrorist groups, including ISIL, have previously used chemical weapons in Iraq and Syria. The dual-use nature of industrial chemicals - chlorine is used in legitimate industries such as water treatment - adds complexity to the threat landscape, requiring robust cooperation between the government and private sectors.

Decontamination stations have been set up, assessing contamination levels and establishing perimeters, including scenarios as diverse as incidents in hotel rooms and airplanes, where participants encounter simulated hazardous materials, hostages and explosions and future training will focus on scene management to ensure proper collection and recording of evidence, essential for criminal prosecutions to identify and address operational gaps in a controlled environment, allowing for improved preparedness and response to real incidents.

UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

[Justice for Yazidis, South Sudan abductions](#)

Ten years after the Yazidi genocide in Sinjar, Iraq, by Dae'sh/ISIL, which devastated the 400,000-strong community, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria renewed calls for justice and accountability for ISIL's crimes. The Commission emphasized the immediate release of Yazidi survivors and victims held in northeast Syria's detention camps, where around 44,000 women and children, mostly foreigners, are detained indefinitely. ISIL's atrocities included genocide, mass executions, forced conversions, enslavement, and sexual violence. Following ISIL's territorial loss in Syria in 2019, many Yazidi women and girls remained detained alongside ISIL families. The UN urged nations to provide Yazidis with choices for return, reunification, or resettlement.

[Rights experts reveal impact of Poland's restrictive abortion laws on women](#)



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Women's rights in Poland are currently under threat because of restrictive abortion laws, which have led to "more avoidable deaths" as it has forced many women to carry unwanted pregnancies to term and they have resorted to illegal and unsafe abortions, according to a report by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The legal ban targets the right to assist women in obtaining abortions, with very few exceptions, and the general inaccessibility of services.

CEDAW described the situation as "gender-based violence against women" and said it could amount to "torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment" following a confidential inquiry in Poland to examine allegations of rights violations made by civil society organizations. The CEDAW report found that Poland's already restrictive legal framework has serious shortcomings in its implementation, including the reluctance of doctors to perform abortions due to fear of prosecution or personal moral and religious beliefs, making it extremely difficult for women to access safe abortion services; women face significant obstacles, particularly in cases where pregnancies result from criminal acts, due to a complex and unsupportive bureaucratic process, a situation compounded by the influence of powerful anti-abortion lobby groups, social stigmatization and threats to those who provide assistance, creating a "complex, hostile and frightening environment" in which access to safe abortion is almost impossible and women's health and lives are put at risk.

Poland's abortion laws cause severe mental and physical suffering, amounting to gender-based violence. Poland's Constitutional Court in 2020 banned abortion even in cases of fatal fetal abnormalities, a decision that leaves abortion legal only in cases where the pregnant woman's life is in danger or in cases of sexual assault. Poland has been urged to recognize abortion as a fundamental human right and to adopt a human rights-based approach to sexual and reproductive health through legal reforms aimed at decriminalizing and fully legalizing abortion.

[Internally displaced families in Yemen need increased aid: UNHCR](#)

The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, says millions of internally displaced families in Yemen are in urgent need of increased humanitarian assistance and the report, based on data from the first half of 2024, shows that 4.5 million people are displaced and a total of 18.2 million are in need of humanitarian aid. The UNHCR update is based on information provided by 47,000 families who have endured years of conflict where 84% of families surveyed are displaced, predominantly from the Al Hudaydah, Taizz and Hajjah regions, where continued instability forces them to move frequently.

Yemen has been embroiled in conflict for over a decade fighting Houthi rebels, supported by international allies on both sides. Despite a largely respected ceasefire, peace talks have made little progress, leaving the country in turmoil, and 85% of these families face food security problems, struggling to meet their daily food needs.

The report noted that every family surveyed has at least one vulnerable member or person with a disability, highlighting the increased need for protection in displaced communities.

Another significant challenge for these families is the lack of civil documentation, with just over half of the families interviewed having at least one child without a birth certificate, and over 70% of family members do not have a national identity card. Lack of documentation severely restricts access to essential services, education and other rights.

UNHCR is working to ensure the long-term stability of displaced families in Yemen by integrating essential services with longer-term shelter solutions such as transitional shelter units, rehabilitating homes and



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improving living conditions in host communities. Many families report not feeling safe upon returning home due to instability and lack of livelihood opportunities, among other challenges.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

[Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip \(South Africa v. Israel\)](#)

On August 7, 2024, Türkiye, invoking Article 63 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), filed a declaration of intervention in the case concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), because when the interpretation of a convention to which States other than those directly concerned in the case are parties is at issue, those States have the right to intervene.

Turkey's intervention is based on its status as a party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide ("Genocide Convention"). Türkiye submits that the interpretation of Articles I, II, III, IV, IV, V and VI of the Genocide Convention is essential and directly relevant to the resolution of the dispute arising from South Africa's application and reserves its right to seek leave to intervene under Article 62 of the Statute.

In accordance with Article 83 of the Rules of Court, both South Africa and Israel were invited to submit their written observations on Türkiye's Statement of Intervention.

On December 29, 2023, South Africa instituted proceedings against Israel, alleging breaches of Israel's obligations under the Genocide Convention in respect of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The application included a request for provisional measures under Article 41 of the Statute and Articles 73, 74 and 75 of the Rules of the Court. South Africa requested measures to prevent further serious and irreparable harm to the Palestinian people and to ensure compliance by Israel with its obligations under the Genocide Convention.

Nicaragua filed an application for authorization to intervene as a party under Article 62 of the Statute, declarations of intervention under Article 63 were subsequently filed by Colombia, Libya, Mexico and Spain and the State of Palestine filed an application for authorization to intervene and a declaration of intervention under Articles 62 and 63 of the Statute.

INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

[IACHR Grants Precautionary Measures to Three Individuals Being Deprived of Their Freedom in Nicaragua](#)

On August 17, 2024, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted preventive measures in response to reports of serious violations of the rights of three persons detained in Nicaragua, following an assessment that found critical risks to the life, personal integrity, and health of the detainees due to inadequate detention conditions and lack of medical care at the Jorge Navarro National Penitentiary and the Integrated Penitentiary for Women (EPIM).



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Frank Kevin Laguna Guevara, Óscar Danilo Parrilla Blandón, and Evelyn Susana Guillén Zepeda were subjected to violence and intimidation by prison officials and the focus was on Ms. Guillén Zepeda's deteriorating mental health, exacerbated by previous sexual violence.

The detainees' legal vulnerability and lack of access to adequate medical care are of significant concern, which led to the issuance of preventive measures under Rule 25 of the IACHR Rules of Procedure and the resolution called on the Nicaraguan government to ensure the protection of the rights of the detainees, including the provision of necessary medical care, the prevention of further violence, and the consideration of alternatives to detention to protect human rights in the region.

[IACHR condemns massive closure of civil society and religious organizations in Nicaragua](#)

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has condemned the Nicaraguan government's decision on 19 August 2024 to cancel the legal status of 1,500 civil society organizations, including at least 700 religious groups that are intensifying repression in Nicaragua and demonstrate an ongoing effort to dismember pluralism and close civic and democratic spaces in the country.

The Ministry of the Interior executed this mass cancellation through Ministerial Agreement 38-2024-OSFL, citing reasons such as failure to file financial statements for periods ranging from one to 35 years, with the assets of these organizations transferred to the state through the Attorney General's Office. The partnership alliances follow a model that requires all civil society projects to collaborate with state institutions and obtain prior approval from the Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Since the beginning of the human rights crisis in Nicaragua, the IACHR's Special Follow-Up Mechanism for Nicaragua (MESENI) has documented the closure of more than 5,000 civil society organizations, including more than 1,200 religious foundations; by 2024, more than 1,600 organizations had been affected by such cancellations accompanied by the seizure and misappropriation of their assets. In its report entitled "[Closing Civic Space in Nicaragua](#)", the IACHR concluded that these large-scale closures severely restrict civil society's ability to actively participate in political, social, cultural and religious life, as well as impede the promotion and defense of human rights and the restoration of democracy.

The IACHR recommends that the Nicaraguan government bring its domestic legislation in line with international human rights standards, in particular those of the Inter-American Declaration of Principles on the Legal Regime for the Creation, Functioning, Financing, and Dissolution of Civil Non-Profit Organizations, and that it immediately cease repressive actions and restore the full exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms to support civil society and religious organizations that continue to advocate for justice, freedom, and democracy despite the current adversities.

[The SRFOE Alerts the International Community about Arbitrary Detention of Journalists and Criminalization of Dissent in Venezuela](#)

The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression (SRFOE) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has condemned the arbitrary detentions and systematic persecution of journalists and dissenting voices in Venezuela following the recent censorship elections and calls for the immediate release of those detained without cause.



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Since the July 28 elections, SRFOE has documented some 1,505 detentions, including activists, human rights defenders, opposition leaders and journalists, including at least 2 LGBTI+ leaders and 10 journalists. These detentions are often preceded by raids and harassment.

Arrests are carried out under the "Anti-Hate Law", with charges including terrorism and incitement, and reports of evidence tampering. Detainees' families face difficulties, including difficulties locating relatives and excessive visitation requirements.

The SRFOE highlights the increasing repression against the media in Venezuela, including raids, media closures, confiscation of equipment and deportations of international journalists. This has created a climate of fear, forcing journalists to adopt protective measures and limiting their reporting which contributes to the stigmatization of media professionals as "coup plotters" and "terrorists". It uses criminalization of online expression and surveillance technology to censor critics, accusing online platforms of spreading hate, which has led to the blocking of more than 100 websites and apps. Journalists are forced to hide their identities and avoid showing up at protests to protect themselves.

The widespread blocking of websites has created an information blockade, limiting access to critical content and worsening the media environment in Venezuela. SRFOE emphasizes the importance of international media presence for transparency and humanitarian support.

Federal and local authorities in Mexico must step up efforts to prevent and punish acts of violence against trans people

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has expressed its deep concern about recent acts of violence against trans and gender-variant people in Mexico during 2024, motivated by prejudice, which violate the fundamental principles of equality, non-discrimination and other human rights. The IACHR condemns violence against LGBTI people, highlighting the worrying statistics: 36 murders of trans women have been reported since January, with at least 8 trans people killed in June and July alone. This represents a significant increase compared to the 43 cases documented during 2023. The IACHR notes that bias-based violence is characterized by extreme cruelty aimed at "punishing" victims for their gender identity or sexual diversity. Inadequate investigations and prevailing impunity exacerbate the problem. The IACHR urges the Mexican authorities to thoroughly investigate these human rights violations, with a focus on gender perspectives and intersectional approaches, ensuring respect for the gender identity of the victims and the protection of their rights. Both federal and local authorities are obligated to prevent, investigate and prosecute hate crimes in an impartial and diligent manner in accordance with international standards. The Mexican authorities need to step up efforts to combat bias-based violence and improve coordination between different levels of government to address these crimes effectively. Compliance with existing frameworks such as the National Protocol on LGBTI+ Action is essential. The IACHR reaffirms its support for Mexico in combating bias-based violence and protecting LGBTI rights.

OSCE

OSCE helps Moldova and Ukraine counter criminal blockchain obfuscation



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OSCE conducted a training program aimed at helping Moldova and Ukraine to counter criminal blockchain obfuscation techniques, hosted by the Ministry of Finance of Poland in Warsaw from 7 to 10 August and targeted financial investigators who are confronted with the complexities of blockchain technology used by criminals to hide and launder illicit funds.

As criminals are exploiting blockchain increasingly for illegal activities, the activity focused on equipping participants with the knowledge and skills to investigate and counter these obfuscation methods through practical exercises that taught them to identify and debug the techniques used by criminals to obfuscate cryptocurrency transactions and combat illicit activities in the financial system.

Blockchain technology is evolving and criminals continue to develop new methods to evade detection, making ongoing training essential for law enforcement. The OSCE is supporting these efforts through its project "Innovative Policy Solutions to Mitigate Money Laundering Risks from Virtual Assets", which is supported by financial contributions from Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom and the United States.

[OSCE strengthens capacity of Ukraine's Border Guard Service to counter criminal threats](#)

The OSCE enhanced the investigative capabilities of 20 criminal analysis officers of the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) of Ukraine and provided specialized training on the use of analytical software to combat criminal threats, which included the provision, implementation, integration and testing of software and hardware solutions, contributing to the safety and security of Ukraine and the region.

The training took place from August 13-15 in Kyiv and focused on improving officers' ability to detect and analyze links between suspects, collect evidence and uncover criminal networks involved in activities such as arms trafficking, drug smuggling and human trafficking.

These efforts are part of the OSCE's extra-budgetary project, "In Support of Strengthening Capacities of Ukrainian Authorities in Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Weapons, Ammunition and Explosives in All Its Aspects", which is funded by the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Finland, France and the Netherlands.

INTERPOL

[Police recover over USD 40 million from international email scam](#)

In a significant case of financial recovery facilitated by INTERPOL, Singapore authorities have made their largest ever recovery from a business email compromise scam. On July 15, 2024, a Singaporean commodity firm fell victim to the scam when a fraudulent email, mimicking their supplier's address, redirected a \$42.3 million payment to a fake account in Timor Leste.

Upon discovering the fraud, the Singapore Police Force (SPF) quickly engaged INTERPOL's Global Rapid Intervention of Payments (I-GRIP) mechanism. Thanks to this rapid response, \$39 million was recovered from the fake account on July 25. Additionally, Timor Leste authorities arrested seven suspects and recovered over \$2 million. The swift action and international cooperation showcased in this case highlight the effectiveness of I-GRIP in combating financial crime and recovering stolen funds.



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EUROPOL

[15 arrested in crackdown on high-profile Albanian criminal network](#)

In a successful joint operation named Operation GORGON, Albanian authorities, alongside Europol and law enforcement agencies from Belgium, the Netherlands, and France, arrested 15 suspected members of a notorious Albanian organized crime group. The operation concluded with a series of raids in Tirana, Albania, resulting in the seizure of significant assets, including real estate and €1 million in cash. The group, structured hierarchically and composed mainly of family members from the same Albanian region, was involved in various criminal activities such as contract killings, large-scale drug trafficking, and money laundering through complex cryptocurrency transactions. A prominent money launderer from Tirana, who served multiple top-level criminal organizations, was among those arrested. The investigation revealed that the group's leader ordered the murder of rival Albanian gang members, resulting in at least seven contract killings between 2019 and 2020, some outside Albania. Europol provided intelligence derived from SKY ECC data to Albania's Special Prosecution Office for Anticorruption and Organised Crime (SPAK), leading to a prompt investigation. Europol experts supported the operation in Tirana with intelligence development and analysis, demonstrating their specialized expertise in organized crime and cybercrime.

[21 arrested in Spain for smuggling Algerian and Syrian migrants into the EU](#)

The Spanish National Police, with support from Europol, dismantled an organized crime network smuggling migrants from Algeria to Spain using fast boats. The network facilitated the illegal movement of migrants, primarily Syrians and Algerians, further into the EU. Over 1,000 migrants were smuggled, paying up to EUR 20,000 each. The criminal operations, coordinated by key organizers in Algeria and Spain, involved dangerous sea crossings in overcrowded boats lacking safety measures. Migrants were then housed in unsanitary conditions in Spain before being moved onward. The network also provided fake passports and plane tickets for travel within the EU and sold smuggling information to other groups. In coordinated raids across Spain in June 2024, authorities arrested 21 people and seized documents, electronic equipment, and cash. Europol supported the operation by facilitating information exchange and providing analytical assistance.

[Euro forger who produced EUR 11 million in fake bills arrested in Italy](#)

On August 14, 2024, the Italian Carabinieri arrested a notorious money forger in Naples and dismantled his advanced counterfeiting operation. The raid uncovered a sophisticated print shop hidden behind a movable wall in the forger's garage, seizing nearly EUR 3 million in high-quality counterfeit banknotes. The operation was part of a broader investigation that began in 2022, with significant contributions from the French National Police and Europol, among others.

The arrested individual is suspected of producing millions of euros in fake banknotes, accounting for over 27% of all counterfeit euros removed from circulation in 2023. Authorities across Europe had previously seized counterfeit euros totalling EUR 950,000, all linked to this forger. The print shop contained 31 digital printing machines and extensive raw materials, enabling near-industrial production of fake banknotes with high-quality security features. The forger is believed to have distributed the counterfeit euros through national and



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transnational channels, particularly in France. Europol supported the investigation by facilitating information exchange, coordinating operations, and providing technical and analytical support during the action day.

Four High Value Targets leading migrant smuggling ring arrested in Bulgaria

On August 19, 2024, Bulgarian authorities arrested eight members of a migrant smuggling gang during a coordinated action in Plovdiv. Four of these suspects were high-value targets involved in smuggling over 130 migrants from Turkey into Europe via the Western Balkan route, charging up to EUR 6,000 per person. The operation, supported by Europol, Romanian, and Moldovan police, involved raids at 15 locations, resulting in the seizure of mobile phones, weapons, ammunition, and vehicle-related documents.

The smuggling network, led by Syrian and Jordanian nationals, operated with the help of Bulgarian logisticians and Moldovan drivers. The drivers, recruited online, would pick up migrants who had crossed the Turkey-Bulgaria border on foot and transport them to the Bulgarian-Serbian or Bulgarian-Romanian border. This network had been linked to 17 incidents since April 2024, with one ringleader already known for similar crimes in Austria and Croatia.

Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre played a crucial role in the investigation, providing extensive operational analysis and facilitating international cooperation. During the action day, Europol experts in Sofia provided real-time support, cross-checking data against their databases to assist Bulgarian authorities.

Largest ever synthetic opioid laboratory in Poland dismantled

The Polish Police Central Bureau of Investigation (CBŚP) and the Counter Narcotics Department of the National Police of Ukraine, with support from Europol, dismantled the largest synthetic opioid production lab ever found in Poland. During a series of 38 raids across Poland and Ukraine, 7 members of the criminal network responsible for producing synthetic opioids and cathinones were arrested. The operation also led to the dismantling of 8 other laboratories and the seizure of 195 kilograms of crystal methadone, 153 kilograms of Alpha-PVP, and over 430 liters of drug precursors.

This operation highlights the serious dangers posed by synthetic drugs like methadone, mephedrone, and Alpha-PVP, which are highly addictive and can cause severe health issues, including death. The success of the operation underscores the importance of cross-border collaboration in combating international drug crime. Europol played a crucial role in providing intelligence and logistical support, with the operation being part of the EU Policy Cycle's EMPACT initiative.

The equipment and resources for the operation were provided through the 'Crystal Palace' project, funded by the European Union Internal Security Fund.

21 arrested in Spain for smuggling Algerian and Syrian migrants into the EU

Spanish national police with Europol support broke up an organized crime network that smuggled migrants from Algeria to Spain using speedboats, subsequently facilitating the further illegal movement of migrants from Spain to other EU countries.

The operation was carried out on June 4 and 5, 2024, resulted in 21 arrests and the seizure of documents, electronic equipment and cash, showing that the network smuggled at least 1,000 migrants, including more than 750 Syrian nationals and more than 250 Algerians, charging them up to €20,000 for the journey. The



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route of the Syrian migrants was Lebanon - Egypt - Tunisia or Libya - Algeria, with dangerous sea crossings from Oran and Mostaganem to Spain in overcrowded boats without safety equipment.

The criminal network organized the smuggling operations in Madrid and Oran, offering migrants accommodation in Spain and facilitating their onward journey to the EU with false documents and plane tickets, with the migrants paying at each stage through the hawala system, with the network using spy cameras to secure the payments.

Europol facilitated the exchange of information and provided operational coordination and analytical support, underlining the effectiveness of international cooperation.

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

[Belarus: EU lists further 28 individuals for participation in internal repression](#)

The EU has imposed sanctions against 28 people in Belarus for involvement in internal repression and human rights violations targeting also two deputy directors of the Main Department for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption (HUBAZiK) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs responsible for political persecution, illegal arrests and torture of activists.

Judges and prosecutors who issued politically-motivated sentences against protesters in the 2020 presidential elections and heads of correctional institutions and long-time supporters of President Lukashenka for disinformation and propaganda are targeted.

EU measures against Belarus currently include 261 individuals and 37 entities and the sanctions include asset freezes and travel bans, preventing designated persons from entering or transiting EU territories. The EU calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners and the abolition of the death penalty. The sanctions motivate EU policies against internal repression in Belarus and Russia's involvement in Russia's war against Ukraine, aiming to penalize political and economic actors supporting these actions, as set out in Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2113 and Council Implementing Decision (CFSP) 2024/2116, both of 26 July 2024, which were published in the Official Journal of the European Union. These acts implement Article 8a(1) of Regulation (EC) No 765/2006 and Decision 2012/642/CFSP.

[Israel/Palestine: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU in support of the call by the Leaders of the US, Egypt and Qatar to conclude ceasefire and hostages release negotiations](#)

The European Union gives its full support to the call by the leaders of the US, Egypt and Qatar to finalize the ceasefire and the agreement to release hostages and detainees.

The EU has consistently supported efforts by the US, Egypt and Qatar to negotiate a ceasefire and welcomed the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2735, which aligns with the principles outlined by President Biden on May 31, 2024. In June, EU leaders, while affirming Israel's right to self-defense, urged immediate and unconditional implementation of the ceasefire proposal.

The EU has repeatedly expressed its deep concern about the situation in Gaza, condemning the high number of civilian casualties. A ceasefire agreement and the release of hostages and detainees is urgently needed and will contribute to regional de-escalation.



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[Afghanistan: Statement of the High Representative on behalf of the EU on latest restrictions imposed by the Taliban on the people](#)

The European Union (EU) has condemned the Taliban's recent decree, known as the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law, which imposes severe restrictions on the lives of Afghans, targeting women in particular. The decree imposes dress codes that force women to cover their bodies and faces in public and restricts their freedom of expression by banning their voices from being heard in public. The decree significantly expands the authority of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, giving it enforcement powers beyond its previous advisory role. This expansion, combined with the punishments provided under Taliban law, violates Afghanistan's legal obligations and international treaties, including the right to a fair trial for Afghan citizens.

The EU considers that this decree is a serious violation of the rights of Afghan women and girls and may amount to gender persecution, which constitutes a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to which Afghanistan is a State Party. The EU calls on the Taliban to stop these systemic abuses against women and girls. The decree represents a significant barrier to Taliban aspirations for normalization of relations and international recognition, as outlined in the UN independent assessment, referred to in UN Security Council Resolution 2721 (2023). For any eventual recognition, the Taliban must respect both their obligations towards Afghan citizens and Afghanistan's international commitments.

The EU reaffirms its support for Afghan women and girls and all those in Afghanistan who face threats from the Taliban.

[Burkina Faso: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the terrorist attack](#)

The European Union firmly condemns the terrorist attack perpetrated by Jama'at Nasr al-Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) on August 24 in Barsalogo, in the Centre-Nord region of Burkina Faso, which resulted in hundreds of victims, mainly civilians. The EU expresses its deepest sympathy to the people of Burkina Faso, conveys its condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured.

Expressing its concern about the deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso and in the whole sub-region, the EU urges all efforts to counter cycles of violence and prevent further escalation. Underlining the importance of the ongoing fight against terrorism in the Sahel, the EU notes that the involvement of actors in violation of international law does not contribute to effectively tackling terrorism. The EU reaffirms its commitment to support the people of Burkina Faso and underlines the need for the country to maintain cooperation with regional and international partners for stability.

[Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the polio vaccination campaign in Gaza](#)

The European Union is calling for immediate humanitarian pauses to facilitate polio vaccinations for all children in Gaza, where the virus has re-emerged after 25 years. The first case was confirmed in July, affecting children in conditions worsened by more than ten months of conflict, displacement, malnutrition, lack of basic medical services and poor sanitation. The EU emphasizes the urgent need to prevent an epidemic among this vulnerable population and to avoid international spread.



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In line with the calls of the United Nations Secretary General and the World Health Organization (WHO), the EU supports immediate humanitarian pauses in Gaza to allow for the vaccination campaign. The two rounds of the campaign, in partnership with the WHO and UNICEF, aim to administer two drops of the new oral polio vaccine type 2 to more than 640,000 children under the age of ten. The EU welcomes the delivery of 1.2 million doses and appreciates Israel's cooperation in facilitating their entry into Gaza. The EU emphasizes the need for all parties to cooperate fully with WHO, UNRWA and UNICEF to ensure the success of the campaign. Commitment to respect humanitarian pauses and to protect health facilities and workers, as well as safe access of children and families to vaccination sites are vital for the timely execution of these essential efforts. The EU has consistently expressed its concern about the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza and supports the ongoing negotiations for a ceasefire and the release of all hostages. As the largest humanitarian donor in Gaza, the EU remains committed to providing aid and support to conflict-affected Palestinians, including through the EU Humanitarian Airlift, increased funding for health facilities, assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and support to humanitarian agencies and NGOs working on the ground.

EUROJUST

[Financial scammers detained following actions coordinated by Eurojust](#)

Romanian and Moldovan authorities, supported by Eurojust and Europol, have dismantled an organized crime group (OCG) responsible for scamming over 150 victims since 2022 through a fake investment scheme. The scam, which falsely promised secure and substantial earnings in virtual currencies, allowed the group to gain access to victims' bank accounts, resulting in estimated damages of approximately EUR 3 million. The scam was uncovered after Romanian victims alerted authorities, leading to a joint investigation between Romania and Moldova. A joint investigation team (JIT) was established to efficiently combat the OCG. On 7 August, coordinated actions resulted in 19 house searches in Moldova, during which evidence such as computers, data storage devices, weapons, and documents were seized. Moldovan authorities detained 12 suspects.

Europol played a crucial role by coordinating operational activities through a virtual command post, providing live cryptoanalysis, and cross-checking data with Europol's databases. The investigation involved Romania's Directorate for Investigation of Organized Crime and Terrorism and Moldova's Prosecutor's Office for Combating Organized Crime and Special Cases.

[Alleged large-scale coin forger arrested in Kosovo due to Eurojust support](#)

With support from the Western Balkans Criminal Justice Project, hosted by Eurojust, an alleged large-scale coin forger has been arrested in Kosovo. The suspect, an employee of the North-Macedonian Ministry of the Interior, is believed to have produced around 2 million counterfeit EUR 2 coins, which were intended to be circulated in the Kosovar economy.

The arrest followed extensive surveillance and a joint investigation team (JIT) effort, with Europol providing intelligence analysis, operational coordination, and technical assistance. During the search of the suspect's home, authorities seized machines used for producing counterfeit currency, coin templates, and raw materials.



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The investigation, supported financially by the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT), will continue to determine the full extent of the forgery operation. EMPACT focuses on combating serious international crime affecting the EU, with fraud and economic crimes being key priorities for the 2021-2025 cycle.

[Eurojust supports large-scale anti-mafia operation leading to arrest and freezing of EUR 50 million](#)

A two-year investigation has uncovered a complex money laundering scheme orchestrated by a mafia family from Palermo, Italy, with profits exceeding EUR 500 million. The mafia family reinvested their criminal earnings into various companies in Brazil, primarily in the real estate and construction sectors. Authorities from Italy, Brazil, and Switzerland collaborated in the investigation, which culminated in a coordinated operation on August 13. During this operation, a key mafia member was arrested in Brazil, and financial assets worth EUR 50 million were frozen across Italy, Brazil, and Switzerland. The investigation, supported by Eurojust, involved searches of 21 locations in Italy, 12 companies, and the home of an Italian businessman in Switzerland. The mafia family's activities, including extortion and fraudulent transfers, were facilitated by a network of financial professionals. Their operations expanded to Brazil in 2016 to launder more profits and support other criminal activities.

[Fugitive Italian crime leader arrested in Slovenia](#)

Italian and Slovenian authorities, with support from Eurojust, successfully arrested a dangerous criminal in Koper, Slovenia. The 40-year-old fugitive, a leader of an Italian organized crime group (OCG) of Calabrian origin, had been on the run since February when he was sentenced to 21 years in prison for various crimes including drug trafficking, extortion, and kidnapping.

Following his conviction, the fugitive fled, prompting the issuance of national and European Arrest Warrants. A complex investigation, involving phone tapping and surveillance, eventually located him in Slovenia. Eurojust facilitated the operation by executing a European Investigation Order (EIO), enabling coordinated surveillance activities. Within 10 days of the EIO's execution, the fugitive was apprehended on August 20th. The OCG leader had trafficked cocaine across Italy and was also convicted of other serious crimes, including robbery, fraud, embezzlement, and mafia-related offenses.

FRONTEX

[EU external borders: Irregular border crossings fall nearly 40% this year](#)

The number of irregular border crossing into European Union in the first seven months of 2024 fell by 36% to 113 400, according to the preliminary data collected by Frontex.

The biggest drop in irregular border crossing was reported on the Western Balkans (75%) and Central Mediterranean routes (64%).

Frontex continues to work for the protection of EU's external borders through a total of 2900 officers.

Key highlights for the first seven months of 2024:

- Central Mediterranean saw a 64% drop (y/y) in detections.



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- Western Balkans also continued to show a strong decrease (-75%), biggest drop among the main migratory routes to the EU.
- Eastern Land Border and Western African route showed the highest rises of 195% and 154%.
- Top three nationalities this year: Syria, Mali, Afghanistan.

Regarding the Central Mediterranean route, it is important to highlight that it has recorded a significant downward trend in recent months. For the January-July period, this migratory route saw a 64% drop in crossings to 32 200. Nevertheless, the Central Mediterranean remains the most active migratory route to the EU. This year's decrease can be attributed mainly to preventive measures by the Tunisian and Libyan authorities to disrupt the activities of smugglers. Arrivals from those two countries account for 95% of all migrants reported on the Central Mediterranean route.

The number of detections on the Western Balkan route also continued to fall significantly in the January-July period and was down as much as 75% to just over 12 400.

Meanwhile, the Western African route continued to record a very high number of detections, with the total of irregular migrants arriving in the Canary Islands in the first seven months increasing by 154% year-on-year to over 21 600. The Eastern Mediterranean was the second most active migratory route this year, with the number of arrivals increasing by 57% to almost 29,700. The Eastern Land Borders continued to note a significant number of arrivals this year with a 195% increase to around 9 500. On the Channel route, the number of detections in the first seven months of 2024 increased by 22% to reach 33,183.

[ETIAS - Fundamental Rights Guidance Board releases its first Annual Report](#)

The ETIAS Fundamental Rights Guidance Board has published its first Annual Report, marking an important step in its mission to safeguard fundamental rights within the framework of European Travel Information of Authorization System. This report provides an overview of the Guidance Board's structure and organization during 2023. During the reporting period, the Guidance Board concentrated on building internal capacity. It also implemented the technical stages of the organization of ETIAS, for example the screening rules and procedures for the processing of applications. The period covered by the report has been characterized by the complexities of implementing ETIAS in a constantly evolving environment. Indeed, during the progressing of this system there were always new challenges on fundamental rights. The Guidance Board has always activated immediately to identify and solve these issues in order to contribute constructively to the development of ETIAS. The implementation of a system like ETIAS, which involves multiple actors, presents a significant challenge both in ensuring the system functions effectively and in protecting fundamental rights. The Guidance Board has begun to face them and is committed to continuing this work in the future.

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF REGIONS

[Partnership with subnational entities is key to strengthening EU-US partnership](#)

The President of the European Committee of Regions, Vasco Alves Cordeiro, took part in the annual meeting of the US National Conference of State Legislators (NCSL), which took place from 5-7 August in Louisville, Kentucky.



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The meeting was held with the aim of encouraging the collaboration between the CoR and its counterparts from other parts of the world

The objective is to increase the awareness of the challenges that subnational authorities have to deal with and help them learn from each other in finding the most effective responses to their challenges.

Is important to mention the speech of Vasco Alves Cordeiro during the event, in which highlighted how the run-up to US presidential elections is a fundamental moment in reaffirming transatlantic relations and the contribution of subnational entities can make to ensure a successful relationship between the United State and the European Union.

The president explained that many of the American states today are faced with issues that are identical to those of EU at local and regional level, for example the housing crisis, the cost of inflation, how to improve education and training systems or to integrate all territories and communities. According to the President, all these are challenges that can be resolved with a transatlantic approach.

EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR CYBERSECURITY (ENISA)

[Applications are open: ENISA Cybersecurity Support Action Programme tender procedure](#)

The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) announces a call for tenders to support ENISA in cybersecurity services provision to Member States.

In 2022, the European Commission entrusted ENISA with EUR 15 million of resources for the establishment and implementation of Cyber security Support Action.

The objective of the found is the provision of cyber security services to support Members States preparation and response in this area. These services are intended for both national and European level to improve prevention and detection capacities, awareness and response to cybersecurity issues and crises. Following the successful implementation of this Pilot project in 2023, further funds were earmarked under the Digital Europe Programme (DEP) to continue this action until the end of 2026.

The aim of this call is to support ENISA in the implementation of the Cybersecurity programme and the provision of those cybersecurity services. In this regard ENISA is looking for economic operators with expertise in cybersecurity field witch value of contract is 28 300 000,00 EUR in total.

ITALIAN COURT OF CASSATION

[The European Arrest Warrant is not to be used as investigations tool \(Sent. Sez. F. n. 32999/2024, ud. 20.08.2024\)](#)

On the matter of the European Arrest Warrant, the Italian Court of Cassation has nullified with referral an order of the Court of Appeal of Venice, by which the Court gave execution to a European Warrant issued by the Croatian judicial authority. The Court has stated, according to its case law, that the European Arrest Warrant cannot be issued for investigation purposes, without the formal prosecution of felonies in front of a judge. According to the Council Framework Decision 2002/584/GAI, the European Arrest Warrant is a judgement



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issued by a Member State tending to the arrest and handover of a person wanted for the prosecution of a crime or for the enforcement of a sentence. The ordinance of the Court of Appeal of Venice violates the Framework Decision and the corresponding implementing act (Law no. 69/2005), as it grants the arrest and the transfer to another Country of someone who has not formally indicted, for the sole purpose of carry on investigative activities, not even specified in the European Arrest Warrant issued by the Croatian authorities. The Court of Appeal of Venice should not have executed the European Arrest Warrant, also given that, for this purpose, the correct tool is the European Investigation Order.

EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE

[Over 900.000 Counterfeit Razor Blades Seized in Joint Operation by OLAF and Spanish and Italian Authorities](#)

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), in collaboration with the Spanish National Police, the Spanish Tax Agency Customs Surveillance, and the Italian Guardia di Finanza, seized over 900,000 counterfeit razor blades across several EU countries and arrested seven individuals in Spain and Italy. The operation targeted a criminal network importing counterfeit razor blades from China, distributing them as genuine products in the EU. The network used intermediary companies to receive shipments and stored the goods in rented units before selling them to wholesalers. This illegal activity harms the EU market by creating unfair competition, impacting legitimate businesses, and posing safety risks to consumers.

EUROJUST

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

[Commission reached an agreement on the new international cybercrime convention](#)

On 8 August 2024, UN member states reached an agreement on a new cybercrime convention aimed at preventing and combating cybercrime, enhancing international cooperation, and safeguarding fundamental rights. The European Commission has represented the EU and its Member States in negotiations since May 2022, engaging civil society and industry throughout the process. The convention complements the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, offering stronger protection for fundamental rights and frameworks for international collaboration, including child sexual abuse prevention. The convention will be submitted to the UN General Assembly for final approval and will be open for signature by UN member states until 31 December 2026.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

[Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the alignment of certain countries with Council Decision \(CFSP\) 2024/2075 concerning restrictive measures against Iran](#)

The Council has decided to remove two individuals and four entities from the list of designated persons and entities in Annex II of Decision 2010/413/CFSP while maintaining restrictive measures against all others listed, except those mentioned in Annex VI. Additionally, 56 entries in Annex II have been updated, and all entries in Annex V have been deleted. Several candidate countries, including North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, and others, along with EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway, have aligned themselves with this decision.

[Belarus: EU lists further 28 individuals for participation in internal repression](#)

The European Union Council has imposed restrictive measures on an additional 28 individuals in Belarus for their involvement in internal repression and human rights violations. These measures now affect a total of 261 individuals and 37 entities. Sanctions target two deputy heads of the Main Department for Combating Organised Crime and Corruption (HUBAZiK), members of the judiciary responsible for politically motivated sentences, and heads of correctional institutions. Additionally, long-time regime supporters, such as media figures spreading disinformation, are also targeted. Sanctions include an asset freeze, travel bans, and restrictions on financial dealings. This decision comes ahead of the fourth anniversary of the fraudulent 2020 presidential elections, highlighting the EU's concern over the worsening human rights situation in Belarus, the lack of democratic legitimacy in recent elections, and the ongoing persecution of civil society. The EU continues to support the Belarusian people's quest for a democratic and sovereign nation.

[Israel/Palestine: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU in support of the call by the Leaders of the US, Egypt and Qatar to conclude ceasefire and hostages release negotiations](#)

The European Union has expressed full support for the recent call by the leaders of the United States, Egypt, and Qatar to finalize a ceasefire and secure the release of hostages and detainees. The EU has consistently



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backed these nations' efforts to negotiate an end to the ongoing conflict, and it welcomed the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2735, which aligns with principles outlined by President Biden on 31 May 2024. The EU has repeatedly voiced deep concern over the situation in Gaza, deploring the high number of civilian casualties and emphasizing the urgent need for a ceasefire and the release of hostages.

[Burkina Faso: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the terrorist attack](#)

The European Union has strongly condemned the terrorist attack carried out by JNIM (Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin) on August 24 in Barsalogo, Burkina Faso. This attack resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties. The EU expressed its solidarity with Burkina Faso, offering condolences to the victims' families and wishing a speedy recovery to the injured.

The EU is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso and the broader region. It encourages all efforts to counteract the violence and prevent further escalation. The EU emphasizes the importance of not relenting in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel and warns that the presence of actors who violate international law may hinder effective anti-terrorism efforts.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to support the people of Burkina Faso and underscores the importance of continued cooperation between Burkina Faso and its regional and international partners for the country's stability.

[Belarus: EU lists further 28 individuals for participation in internal repression](#)

The EU has imposed sanctions against 28 people in Belarus for involvement in internal repression and human rights violations targeting also two deputy directors of the Main Department for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption (HUBAZiK) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs responsible for political persecution, illegal arrests and torture of activists.

Judges and prosecutors who issued politically-motivated sentences against protesters in the 2020 presidential elections and heads of correctional institutions and long-time supporters of President Lukashenka for disinformation and propaganda are targeted.

EU measures against Belarus currently include 261 individuals and 37 entities and the sanctions include asset freezes and travel bans, preventing designated persons from entering or transiting EU territories. The EU calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners and the abolition of the death penalty.

The sanctions motivate EU policies against internal repression in Belarus and Russia's involvement in Russia's war against Ukraine, aiming to penalize political and economic actors supporting these actions, as set out in Council Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/2113 and Council Implementing Decision (CFSP) 2024/2116, both of 26 July 2024, which were published in the Official Journal of the European Union. These acts implement Article 8a(1) of Regulation (EC) No 765/2006 and Decision 2012/642/CFSP.

[Israel/Palestine: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU in support of the call by the Leaders of the US, Egypt and Qatar to conclude ceasefire and hostages release negotiations](#)

The European Union gives its full support to the call by the leaders of the US, Egypt and Qatar to finalize the ceasefire and the agreement to release hostages and detainees.



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The EU has consistently supported efforts by the US, Egypt and Qatar to negotiate a ceasefire and welcomed the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2735, which aligns with the principles outlined by President Biden on May 31, 2024. In June, EU leaders, while affirming Israel's right to self-defense, urged immediate and unconditional implementation of the ceasefire proposal.

The EU has repeatedly expressed its deep concern about the situation in Gaza, condemning the high number of civilian casualties. A ceasefire agreement and the release of hostages and detainees is urgently needed and will contribute to regional de-escalation.

[Afghanistan: Statement of the High Representative on behalf of the EU on latest restrictions imposed by the Taliban on the people](#)

The European Union (EU) has condemned the Taliban's recent decree, known as the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice Law, which imposes severe restrictions on the lives of Afghans, targeting women in particular. The decree imposes dress codes that force women to cover their bodies and faces in public and restricts their freedom of expression by banning their voices from being heard in public.

The decree significantly expands the authority of the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, giving it enforcement powers beyond its previous advisory role. This expansion, combined with the punishments provided under Taliban law, violates Afghanistan's legal obligations and international treaties, including the right to a fair trial for Afghan citizens.

The EU considers that this decree is a serious violation of the rights of Afghan women and girls and may amount to gender persecution, which constitutes a crime against humanity under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to which Afghanistan is a State Party. The EU calls on the Taliban to stop these systemic abuses against women and girls.

The decree represents a significant barrier to Taliban aspirations for normalization of relations and international recognition, as outlined in the UN independent assessment, referred to in UN Security Council Resolution 2721 (2023). For any eventual recognition, the Taliban must respect both their obligations towards Afghan citizens and Afghanistan's international commitments.

The EU reaffirms its support for Afghan women and girls and all those in Afghanistan who face threats from the Taliban.

[Burkina Faso: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the terrorist attack](#)

The European Union firmly condemns the terrorist attack perpetrated by Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) on August 24 in Barsalogho, in the Centre-Nord region of Burkina Faso, which resulted in hundreds of victims, mainly civilians. The EU expresses its deepest sympathy to the people of Burkina Faso, conveys its condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured.

Expressing its concern about the deteriorating security situation in Burkina Faso and in the whole sub-region, the EU urges all efforts to counter cycles of violence and prevent further escalation. Underlining the importance of the ongoing fight against terrorism in the Sahel, the EU notes that the involvement of actors in violation of international law does not contribute to effectively tackling terrorism.

The EU reaffirms its commitment to support the people of Burkina Faso and underlines the need for the country to maintain cooperation with regional and international partners for stability.



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[Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the polio vaccination campaign in Gaza](#)

The European Union is calling for immediate humanitarian pauses to facilitate polio vaccinations for all children in Gaza, where the virus has re-emerged after 25 years. The first case was confirmed in July, affecting children in conditions worsened by more than ten months of conflict, displacement, malnutrition, lack of basic medical services and poor sanitation. The EU emphasizes the urgent need to prevent an epidemic among this vulnerable population and to avoid international spread.

In line with the calls of the United Nations Secretary General and the World Health Organization (WHO), the EU supports immediate humanitarian pauses in Gaza to allow for the vaccination campaign. The two rounds of the campaign, in partnership with the WHO and UNICEF, aim to administer two drops of the new oral polio vaccine type 2 to more than 640,000 children under the age of ten. The EU welcomes the delivery of 1.2 million doses and appreciates Israel's cooperation in facilitating their entry into Gaza. The EU emphasizes the need for all parties to cooperate fully with WHO, UNRWA and UNICEF to ensure the success of the campaign. Commitment to respect humanitarian pauses and to protect health facilities and workers, as well as safe access of children and families to vaccination sites are vital for the timely execution of these essential efforts.

The EU has consistently expressed its concern about the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza and supports the ongoing negotiations for a ceasefire and the release of all hostages. As the largest humanitarian donor in Gaza, the EU remains committed to providing aid and support to conflict-affected Palestinians, including through the EU Humanitarian Airlift, increased funding for health facilities, assistance through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and support to humanitarian agencies and NGOs working on the ground.

EUROPEAN PUBLIC PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

[Investigation Goliath: Suspected ringleaders of international crime group charged with €93 million VAT fraud](#)

Three suspected ringleaders of an international criminal group were indicted at the Regional Court of Düsseldorf for a €93 million VAT fraud following an investigation by the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Hamburg, code-named Goliath. The suspects, involved in a VAT carousel fraud scheme primarily trading consumer electronics like AirPods, allegedly evaded taxes by exploiting EU cross-border transaction rules. The investigation, supported by Europol and various national agencies, spanned multiple countries and led to significant seizures. If convicted, the defendants face up to 10 years in prison. All suspects are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

EUROPEAN UNION

[Commission Regulation \(EU\) 2024/2105 of 31 July 2024 refusing to authorise a health claim made on foods, other than those referring to the reduction of disease risk and to children's development and health](#)

The European Commission has refused to authorize a health claim submitted by BENEIO GmbH concerning isomaltulose and its contribution to normal energy-yielding metabolism. Although the European Food Safety



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Authority (EFSA) found that a cause-and-effect relationship exists between isomaltulose consumption and energy metabolism, it noted that this effect applies to all energy-yielding macronutrients, not just isomaltulose. The Commission concluded that the health claim could mislead consumers by promoting sugar consumption, contrary to public health advice to reduce sugar intake. Consequently, the claim will not be added to the EU's list of permitted health claims.

[Commission Decision \(EU\) 2024/2092 of 31 July 2024 confirming the participation of Ireland in Regulation \(EU\) 2024/1359 of the European Parliament and of the Council addressing situations of crisis and force majeure in the field of migration and asylum](#)

The European Commission has confirmed Ireland's participation in Regulation (EU) 2024/1359, which addresses crisis and force majeure situations in migration and asylum. Ireland notified its intention to accept and be bound by the regulation in a letter dated 27 June 2024. The regulation, adopted on 14 May 2024, will apply from 1 July 2026. Ireland's participation is confirmed without any specific conditions or transitional measures, and the decision will take effect 20 days after its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

[Council Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2024/2113 of 26 July 2024 implementing Article 8a\(1\) of Regulation \(EC\) No 765/2006 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Belarus and the involvement of Belarus in the Russian aggression against Ukraine](#)

The Council of the European Union has amended Regulation (EC) No 765/2006 to impose further restrictive measures in response to the situation in Belarus, particularly due to Belarus's involvement in Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its repression of political freedoms. Following a proposal from the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 28 individuals have been added to the list of those subject to sanctions, as outlined in Annex I of the regulation. This amendment reflects the EU's condemnation of the human rights violations and lack of democratic legitimacy in Belarus, and the regulation takes effect upon its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

EUROPOL

[15 arrested in crackdown on high-profile Albanian criminal network](#)

In a successful joint operation named Operation GORGON, Albanian authorities, alongside Europol and law enforcement agencies from Belgium, the Netherlands, and France, arrested 15 suspected members of a notorious Albanian organized crime group. The operation concluded with a series of raids in Tirana, Albania, resulting in the seizure of significant assets, including real estate and €1 million in cash. The group, structured hierarchically and composed mainly of family members from the same Albanian region, was involved in various criminal activities such as contract killings, large-scale drug trafficking, and money laundering through complex cryptocurrency transactions. A prominent money launderer from Tirana, who served multiple top-level criminal organizations, was among those arrested. The investigation revealed that the group's leader ordered the murder of rival Albanian gang members, resulting in at least seven contract killings between 2019



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and 2020, some outside Albania. Europol provided intelligence derived from SKY ECC data to Albania's Special Prosecution Office for Anticorruption and Organised Crime (SPAK), leading to a prompt investigation. Europol experts supported the operation in Tirana with intelligence development and analysis, demonstrating their specialized expertise in organized crime and cybercrime.

[21 arrested in Spain for smuggling Algerian and Syrian migrants into the EU](#)

The Spanish National Police, with support from Europol, dismantled an organized crime network smuggling migrants from Algeria to Spain using fast boats. The network facilitated the illegal movement of migrants, primarily Syrians and Algerians, further into the EU. Over 1,000 migrants were smuggled, paying up to EUR 20,000 each. The criminal operations, coordinated by key organizers in Algeria and Spain, involved dangerous sea crossings in overcrowded boats lacking safety measures. Migrants were then housed in unsanitary conditions in Spain before being moved onward. The network also provided fake passports and plane tickets for travel within the EU and sold smuggling information to other groups. In coordinated raids across Spain in June 2024, authorities arrested 21 people and seized documents, electronic equipment, and cash. Europol supported the operation by facilitating information exchange and providing analytical assistance.

[Euro forger who produced EUR 11 million in fake bills arrested in Italy](#)

On August 14, 2024, the Italian Carabinieri arrested a notorious money forger in Naples and dismantled his advanced counterfeiting operation. The raid uncovered a sophisticated print shop hidden behind a movable wall in the forger's garage, seizing nearly EUR 3 million in high-quality counterfeit banknotes. The operation was part of a broader investigation that began in 2022, with significant contributions from the French National Police and Europol, among others.

The arrested individual is suspected of producing millions of euros in fake banknotes, accounting for over 27% of all counterfeit euros removed from circulation in 2023. Authorities across Europe had previously seized counterfeit euros totaling EUR 950,000, all linked to this forger. The print shop contained 31 digital printing machines and extensive raw materials, enabling near-industrial production of fake banknotes with high-quality security features. The forger is believed to have distributed the counterfeit euros through national and transnational channels, particularly in France. Europol supported the investigation by facilitating information exchange, coordinating operations, and providing technical and analytical support during the action day.

[Four High Value Targets leading migrant smuggling ring arrested in Bulgaria](#)

On August 19, 2024, Bulgarian authorities arrested eight members of a migrant smuggling gang during a coordinated action in Plovdiv. Four of these suspects were high-value targets involved in smuggling over 130 migrants from Turkey into Europe via the Western Balkan route, charging up to EUR 6,000 per person. The operation, supported by Europol, Romanian, and Moldovan police, involved raids at 15 locations, resulting in the seizure of mobile phones, weapons, ammunition, and vehicle-related documents.

The smuggling network, led by Syrian and Jordanian nationals, operated with the help of Bulgarian logisticians and Moldovan drivers. The drivers, recruited online, would pick up migrants who had crossed the Turkey-Bulgaria border on foot and transport them to the Bulgarian-Serbian or Bulgarian-Romanian border. This



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network had been linked to 17 incidents since April 2024, with one ringleader already known for similar crimes in Austria and Croatia.

Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre played a crucial role in the investigation, providing extensive operational analysis and facilitating international cooperation. During the action day, Europol experts in Sofia provided real-time support, cross-checking data against their databases to assist Bulgarian authorities.

[Europol and New Zealand strengthen ties to fight serious crime and terrorism](#)

The EU and New Zealand have entered into a new agreement, effective from August 15, 2024, that enhances their cooperation in combating serious organized crime and terrorism. This agreement, the first under the Europol Regulation 2017, allows Europol to transfer personal data to New Zealand authorities. It includes provisions on data protection, rights of data subjects, and oversight mechanisms. Building on a 2019 working arrangement, the agreement deepens collaboration, with New Zealand gaining access to Europol's secure communication channels and maintaining a Liaison Officer at Europol's headquarters.

[Largest ever synthetic opioid laboratory in Poland dismantled](#)

The Polish Police Central Bureau of Investigation (CBŚP) and the Counter Narcotics Department of the National Police of Ukraine, with support from Europol, dismantled the largest synthetic opioid production lab ever found in Poland. During a series of 38 raids across Poland and Ukraine, 7 members of the criminal network responsible for producing synthetic opioids and cathinones were arrested. The operation also led to the dismantling of 8 other laboratories and the seizure of 195 kilograms of crystal methadone, 153 kilograms of Alpha-PVP, and over 430 liters of drug precursors.

This operation highlights the serious dangers posed by synthetic drugs like methadone, mephedrone, and Alpha-PVP, which are highly addictive and can cause severe health issues, including death. The success of the operation underscores the importance of cross-border collaboration in combating international drug crime. Europol played a crucial role in providing intelligence and logistical support, with the operation being part of the EU Policy Cycle's EMPACT initiative.

The equipment and resources for the operation were provided through the 'Crystal Palace' project, funded by the European Union Internal Security Fund.

[15 arrested in crackdown on high-profile Albanian criminal network](#)

The Albanian authorities assisted by Europol and law enforcement agencies from Belgium, the Netherlands and France completed Operation GORGON, targeting an Albanian organized crime group involved in several jurisdictions which led to the arrest of 15 suspected members and the seizure of significant assets, including real estate and €1 million in cash.

The organized criminal group was hierarchically structured, consisting mainly of family members and associates from the same area in Albania, and involved in activities such as contract killings, large-scale drug trafficking and money laundering through complex cryptocurrency transactions. Among those arrested was a prominent Tirana-based money launderer who served high-level international criminal groups involved in murder, corruption and drug trafficking, with the investigation revealing the group's involvement in ordering at least seven contract killings between 2019 and 2020 in and outside Albania.



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Europol had the operational role of developing intelligence on the group's activities through the analysis of SKY ECC data, information which was provided to the Albanian Special Prosecutor's Office for the Fight against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) being ensured the ongoing development and analysis of intelligence, seconding three experts to support law enforcement actions in Tirana.

The participating authorities included the Albanian Special Prosecutor's Office for Anti-Corruption and Organized Crime, the National Bureau of Investigation, the Albanian State Police, the Belgian Federal Police, the French National Police and the Dutch National Police who carried out the operation through international cooperation and exchange of information to break up cross-border organized crime networks.

21 arrested in Spain for smuggling Algerian and Syrian migrants into the EU

Spanish national police with Europol support broke up an organized crime network that smuggled migrants from Algeria to Spain using speedboats, subsequently facilitating the further illegal movement of migrants from Spain to other EU countries.

The operation was carried out on June 4 and 5, 2024, resulted in 21 arrests and the seizure of documents, electronic equipment and cash, showing that the network smuggled at least 1,000 migrants, including more than 750 Syrian nationals and more than 250 Algerians, charging them up to €20,000 for the journey. The route of the Syrian migrants was Lebanon - Egypt - Tunisia or Libya - Algeria, with dangerous sea crossings from Oran and Mostaganem to Spain in overcrowded boats without safety equipment.

The criminal network organized the smuggling operations in Madrid and Oran, offering migrants accommodation in Spain and facilitating their onward journey to the EU with false documents and plane tickets, with the migrants paying at each stage through the hawala system, with the network using spy cameras to secure the payments.

Europol facilitated the exchange of information and provided operational coordination and analytical support, underlining the effectiveness of international cooperation.

Euro forger who produced EUR 11 million in fake bills arrested in Italy

On August 14, 2024, the Italian Carabinieri conducted an operation in Naples in which they arrested a counterfeiter and dismantled the counterfeiting operation. The counterfeiter was operating from a bunker-like printing lab hidden in his private residence in Naples where Carabinieri investigators discovered an industrial-scale production line equipped with 31 digital printing machines and a large stock of raw materials; the facility was concealed behind a movable wall in his garage, accessed via a homemade electronic system.

The raid led to the seizure of nearly €3 million in high-quality counterfeit banknotes with the support of the French National Police and Europol, which began in 2022 and involved contributions from intelligence services from at least 10 countries that had reported seizures of the same counterfeit euro notes.

Authorities have already intercepted around €950,000 worth of counterfeit notes before they could enter circulation, all of which can be traced back to this counterfeiter. The hypothesis is that the arrested individual produced more than 27% of all counterfeit euro banknotes discovered in 2023, with an estimated total face value of €8 million.



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The counterfeit banknotes, in €20, €50 and €100 denominations, were distributed through several national and transnational channels, with a significant proportion reaching France, and the counterfeit security features, such as holograms, were of high quality.

Europol facilitated the exchange of information, funding and coordination of operational activities by providing technical support and verifying information in its databases and in the European Central Bank's systems.

Four High Value Targets leading migrant smuggling ring arrested in Bulgaria

On August 19, 2024, Bulgarian authorities, with the support of Europol and agencies in Romania and Moldova, arrested eight suspected members of a migrant smuggling gang, of those arrested, four had already been identified as high-value targets due to their leadership roles in the criminal network. The gang, which reportedly charged up to €6,000 per person, is believed to have smuggled more than 130 people from Turkey to Bulgaria and onwards to other European destinations via the Western Balkans route.

The operation included raids on 15 locations in the Plovdiv region of Bulgaria where 13 mobile phones, a weapon and ammunition, as well as vehicle documents related to the smuggling incidents were seized, with the work coordinated by Europol.

The migrant smuggling network was an international operation involving leaders, organizers and facilitators of different nationalities and the key figures were Syrian and Jordanian nationals who coordinated activities with smugglers from Turkey and the Western Balkan route. Bulgarian nationals handled the logistics, including procuring and registering vehicles used for transportation and Moldovan drivers, recruited online, transported migrants across Bulgaria's borders with Serbia or Romania with 17 incidents linked to the gang identified since April 2024.

Europol provided an operational analysis identifying targets and mapping criminal activities in order to dismantle the gang and limit migrant smuggling activities in the region.

28 arrested and cocaine lab dismantled in hit against drug traffickers

The Spanish and Colombian authorities, supported by Europol, carried out an operation targeting a cocaine smuggling network which led to the arrest of 28 suspects and the seizure of significant assets, including 47 kilograms of processed cocaine hydrochloride and €245,000 in cash.

The operation, part of the EMPACT cycle, succeeded in dismantling a cocaine extraction and processing laboratory, which involves sophisticated cocaine processing laboratories.

The criminal network was hierarchically structured, comprised mainly of Colombian and Spanish nationals, and led by a former member of the disbanded Colombian paramilitary group "Bloque Central Bolívar", involved in smuggling activities that included the technique of injecting cocaine base into cardboard boxes carrying legal goods such as fruit, and then extracting and processing the drug on arrival in Spain.

Europol played a role by compiling intelligence on the network's activities, analytical and forensic expertise conducting real-time cross-checks with the agency's databases, which were instrumental in dismantling the organization's logistical and company structures.

Law enforcement agencies have seen an increase in the number and sophistication of laboratories dedicated to processing cocaine base into its final consumable form.



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[Europol and New Zealand strengthen ties to fight serious crime and terrorism](#)

The European Union (EU) and New Zealand have strengthened their partnership in the fight against serious organized crime and terrorism with a new agreement allowing the exchange of personal data between Europol and New Zealand authorities to enhance their ability to combat these threats more effectively.

The agreement, which entered into force on August 15, 2024, includes provisions on the exchange of information, data protection, the rights of data subjects, the establishment of a supervisory authority and administrative and judicial remedies. It is the first of its kind under the [Europol Regulation 2017](#), which allows Europol to transfer personal data to third-country authorities on the basis of an international agreement with the EU.

This agreement builds on the working arrangement established in 2019 between the New Zealand Police (Nga Pirihiimana O Aotearoa) and Europol. Under this agreement, New Zealand has collaborated closely with Europol and EU Member States to share expertise, situation reports, strategic analysis, participate in training and support individual criminal investigations. In addition, New Zealand has access to Europol's secure communication channels and maintains a liaison officer at Europol headquarters.

[Largest ever synthetic opioid laboratory in Poland dismantled](#)

On August 17, 2024, the Central Investigative Bureau of the Polish Police (CBŚP) and the Counter Narcotics Department of the National Police of Ukraine conducted a coordinated operation that led to the dismantling of the largest synthetic opioid laboratory ever discovered in Poland. The operation, supported by Europol, included 38 raids in Poland and Ukraine, targeting various drug production sites where they uncovered several laboratories used for the production of synthetic cathinones, such as mephedrone and Alpha-PVP, and synthetic opioids, such as crystalline methadone.

The raids led to the arrest of 7 members of the criminal network and the seizure of 195 kilograms of methadone, 153 kilograms of Alpha-PVP, over 430 liters of reaction mixtures and large quantities of drug precursors and chemicals needed to produce the synthetic drugs. Methadone, commonly used as a medical painkiller, was found in a concentrated crystalline form associated with illegal markets and posing serious health risks.

The operation involved dismantling 8 multiple laboratories and securing massive quantities of drugs and chemicals, highlighting the significant threat posed by synthetic drug production in Europe. Law enforcement agencies benefited from Europol's operational and analytical support, including information sharing and cross-checking through the European Illicit Laboratory Comparison System (EILCS). Europol's involvement was part of a wider EU effort under the EMPACT platform, which prioritizes the fight against synthetic drugs and includes funding through the Crystal Palace project led by Poland, the Netherlands and Italy.

[Euro forger who produced EUR 11 million in fake bills arrested in Italy](#)

On 14 August 2024, the Italian Carabinieri arrested a notorious money forger in Naples, dismantling his sophisticated counterfeiting operation and seizing nearly €3 million in high-quality counterfeit banknotes. The forger, responsible for producing over €11 million in fake euros, operated a concealed, bunker-like printing lab in his home. This operation, supported by Europol and the French National Police, traced the forger's



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network across Europe, where counterfeit banknotes worth around €950,000 had already been seized. The forger's counterfeit bills represented over 27% of all fake euros removed from circulation in 2023.

[Corrupt Spanish lawyer arrested for EUR 4.5 million fishery project bribe in Equatorial Guinea](#)

The Spanish National Police arrested a lawyer in Asturias on 2 July 2024 for allegedly corrupting high-level officials close to the Equatorial Guinea government, as part of an investigation supported by Europol. The lawyer is accused of transferring around €4.5 million through his company to secure a contract for building a fishery processing plant in Equatorial Guinea. Despite the company reporting minimal activity, significant payments were made to individuals connected to the government. The operation resulted in the seizure of real estate, cash, and bank accounts totaling millions of euros. The lawyer faces charges of corruption, money laundering, and document forgery.

INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (IACHR)

[The SRFOE condemns the murder of journalist Alejandro Martínez Noguez and urges a diligent and thorough investigation](#)

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), through its Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression (SRFOE), condemned the murder of journalist Alejandro Martínez Noguez in Celaya, Guanajuato, Mexico, who was shot while returning from a press event for covering political and sports issues and called for a thorough investigation that would consider his profession as a possible motive and hold those responsible to account.

The journalist died from his injuries and two police officers accompanying him were wounded, he was under federal protection due to previous assaults, including an attempted murder in 2022.

The Guanajuato Attorney General's Office has launched an investigation and the SRFOE has expressed concern about the increase in violence against journalists in Mexico, with Martínez Noguez being the third journalist killed in 2024, joining Roberto Figueroa, Víctor Morales and broadcaster Martín Antonio Olivier Rodríguez.

The SRFOE emphasized that the murder of journalists both violates the right to life and constitutes a serious attack on freedom of expression amounting to outright censorship and that it is the duty of states to prevent and investigate such crimes, punish the perpetrators and provide compensation to the victims. The office emphasized the need for increased protection measures for journalists, especially in regions where they are at greater risk.

[IACHR Grants Precautionary Measures to Three Individuals Being Deprived of Their Freedom in Nicaragua](#)

On August 17, 2024, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted preventive measures in response to reports of serious violations of the rights of three persons detained in Nicaragua, following an assessment that found critical risks to the life, personal integrity, and health of the detainees due to inadequate detention conditions and lack of medical care at the Jorge Navarro National Penitentiary and the Integrated Penitentiary for Women (EPIM).



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Frank Kevin Laguna Guevara, Óscar Danilo Parrilla Blandón, and Evelyn Susana Guillén Zepeda were subjected to violence and intimidation by prison officials and the focus was on Ms. Guillén Zepeda's deteriorating mental health, exacerbated by previous sexual violence.

The detainees' legal vulnerability and lack of access to adequate medical care are of significant concern, which led to the issuance of preventive measures under Rule 25 of the IACHR Rules of Procedure and the resolution called on the Nicaraguan government to ensure the protection of the rights of the detainees, including the provision of necessary medical care, the prevention of further violence, and the consideration of alternatives to detention to protect human rights in the region.

[IACHR condemns massive closure of civil society and religious organizations in Nicaragua](#)

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has condemned the Nicaraguan government's decision on 19 August 2024 to cancel the legal status of 1,500 civil society organizations, including at least 700 religious groups that are intensifying repression in Nicaragua and demonstrate an ongoing effort to dismember pluralism and close civic and democratic spaces in the country.

The Ministry of the Interior executed this mass cancellation through Ministerial Agreement 38-2024-OSFL, citing reasons such as failure to file financial statements for periods ranging from one to 35 years, with the assets of these organizations transferred to the state through the Attorney General's Office. The partnership alliances follow a model that requires all civil society projects to collaborate with state institutions and obtain prior approval from the Ministry of Interior or Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Since the beginning of the human rights crisis in Nicaragua, the IACHR's Special Follow-Up Mechanism for Nicaragua (MESENI) has documented the closure of more than 5,000 civil society organizations, including more than 1,200 religious foundations; by 2024, more than 1,600 organizations had been affected by such cancellations accompanied by the seizure and misappropriation of their assets. In its report entitled "[Closing Civic Space in Nicaragua](#)", the IACHR concluded that these large-scale closures severely restrict civil society's ability to actively participate in political, social, cultural and religious life, as well as impede the promotion and defense of human rights and the restoration of democracy.

The IACHR recommends that the Nicaraguan government bring its domestic legislation in line with international human rights standards, in particular those of the Inter-American Declaration of Principles on the Legal Regime for the Creation, Functioning, Financing, and Dissolution of Civil Non-Profit Organizations, and that it immediately cease repressive actions and restore the full exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms to support civil society and religious organizations that continue to advocate for justice, freedom, and democracy despite the current adversities.

[The SRFOE Alerts the International Community about Arbitrary Detention of Journalists and Criminalization of Dissent in Venezuela](#)

The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression (SRFOE) of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has condemned the arbitrary detentions and systematic persecution of journalists and dissenting voices in Venezuela following the recent censorship elections and calls for the immediate release of those detained without cause.



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Since the July 28 elections, SRFOE has documented some 1,505 detentions, including activists, human rights defenders, opposition leaders and journalists, including at least 2 LGBTI+ leaders and 10 journalists. These detentions are often preceded by raids and harassment.

Arrests are carried out under the "Anti-Hate Law", with charges including terrorism and incitement, and reports of evidence tampering. Detainees' families face difficulties, including difficulties locating relatives and excessive visitation requirements.

The SRFOE highlights the increasing repression against the media in Venezuela, including raids, media closures, confiscation of equipment and deportations of international journalists. This has created a climate of fear, forcing journalists to adopt protective measures and limiting their reporting which contributes to the stigmatization of media professionals as "coup plotters" and "terrorists". It uses criminalization of online expression and surveillance technology to censor critics, accusing online platforms of spreading hate, which has led to the blocking of more than 100 websites and apps. Journalists are forced to hide their identities and avoid showing up at protests to protect themselves.

The widespread blocking of websites has created an information blockade, limiting access to critical content and worsening the media environment in Venezuela. SRFOE emphasizes the importance of international media presence for transparency and humanitarian support.

Federal and local authorities in Mexico must step up efforts to prevent and punish acts of violence against trans people

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) has expressed its deep concern about recent acts of violence against trans and gender-variant people in Mexico during 2024, motivated by prejudice, which violate the fundamental principles of equality, non-discrimination and other human rights.

The IACHR condemns violence against LGBTI people, highlighting the worrying statistics: 36 murders of trans women have been reported since January, with at least 8 trans people killed in June and July alone. This represents a significant increase compared to the 43 cases documented during 2023.

The IACHR notes that bias-based violence is characterized by extreme cruelty aimed at "punishing" victims for their gender identity or sexual diversity. Inadequate investigations and prevailing impunity exacerbate the problem.

The IACHR urges the Mexican authorities to thoroughly investigate these human rights violations, with a focus on gender perspectives and intersectional approaches, ensuring respect for the gender identity of the victims and the protection of their rights. Both federal and local authorities are obligated to prevent, investigate and prosecute hate crimes in an impartial and diligent manner in accordance with international standards.

The Mexican authorities need to step up efforts to combat bias-based violence and improve coordination between different levels of government to address these crimes effectively. Compliance with existing frameworks such as the National Protocol on LGBTI+ Action is essential. The IACHR reaffirms its support for Mexico in combating bias-based violence and protecting LGBTI rights.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE



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[Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip \(South Africa vs. Israel\)](#)

On August 7, 2024, Türkiye filed a declaration of intervention under Article 63 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the ongoing case Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel). Türkiye seeks to participate due to its status as a party to the Genocide Convention, arguing that the interpretation of key articles of the Convention is crucial to the case.

This case, initiated by South Africa on December 29, 2023, accuses Israel of violating the Genocide Convention in its actions toward Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Multiple states, including Nicaragua, Colombia, Libya, Mexico, Palestine, and Spain, have also sought to intervene in the case under the ICJ's statutes. The ICJ has issued several provisional measures to prevent further harm to the Palestinian people and ensure compliance with the Genocide Convention by Israel.

The proceedings underscore the global significance and legal complexities surrounding the allegations of genocide and the involvement of multiple states in the legal interpretation of international conventions.

[Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change](#)

On August 7, 2024, Türkiye filed a declaration of intervention with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), invoking Article 63 of the ICJ Statute. Türkiye, along with other countries including Nicaragua, Colombia, Libya, Mexico, the State of Palestine, and Spain, has intervened in the case to address the proper interpretation of the Genocide Convention, particularly concerning Israel's alleged violations related to Palestinians in Gaza. South Africa initiated proceedings against Israel in December 2023, requesting provisional measures to prevent further harm to Palestinians. The ICJ has since issued several orders indicating provisional measures to protect the rights of Palestinians under the Genocide Convention.

ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

[OSCE helps Moldova and Ukraine counter criminal blockchain obfuscation](#)

OSCE conducted a training program aimed at helping Moldova and Ukraine to counter criminal blockchain obfuscation techniques, hosted by the Ministry of Finance of Poland in Warsaw from 7 to 10 August and targeted financial investigators who are confronted with the complexities of blockchain technology used by criminals to hide and launder illicit funds.

As criminals are exploiting blockchain increasingly for illegal activities, the activity focused on equipping participants with the knowledge and skills to investigate and counter these obfuscation methods through practical exercises that taught them to identify and debug the techniques used by criminals to obfuscate cryptocurrency transactions and combat illicit activities in the financial system.

Blockchain technology is evolving and criminals continue to develop new methods to evade detection, making ongoing training essential for law enforcement. The OSCE is supporting these efforts through its project



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"Innovative Policy Solutions to Mitigate Money Laundering Risks from Virtual Assets", which is supported by financial contributions from Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom and the United States.

[OSCE strengthens capacity of Ukraine's Border Guard Service to counter criminal threats](#)

The OSCE enhanced the investigative capabilities of 20 criminal analysis officers of the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) of Ukraine and provided specialized training on the use of analytical software to combat criminal threats, which included the provision, implementation, integration and testing of software and hardware solutions, contributing to the safety and security of Ukraine and the region.

The training took place from August 13-15 in Kyiv and focused on improving officers' ability to detect and analyze links between suspects, collect evidence and uncover criminal networks involved in activities such as arms trafficking, drug smuggling and human trafficking.

These efforts are part of the OSCE's extra-budgetary project, "In Support of Strengthening Capacities of Ukrainian Authorities in Preventing and Combating Illicit Trafficking in Weapons, Ammunition and Explosives in All Its Aspects", which is funded by the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Finland, France and the Netherlands.

SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

[Resolution 2746 \(2024\)](#)

The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2746 (2024) on August 6, 2024, addressing the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), particularly in the east. The resolution reaffirms support for the DRC's sovereignty and condemns armed groups like M23 and FDLR, along with unauthorized foreign military interventions.

The resolution authorizes MONUSCO to support the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) through coordination, information-sharing, and logistical aid, emphasizing civilian protection. It condemns violence and attacks on UN and SAMIDRC personnel, calling for accountability.

It supports the ceasefire between the DRC and Rwanda and urges continued diplomatic efforts for a lasting peace. The resolution also acknowledges MONUSCO's phased withdrawal and emphasizes the importance of a responsible, coordinated exit while ensuring civilian safety.

Regular reporting from the Secretary-General and SAMIDRC is requested to ensure transparency and accountability. The resolution highlights the need for international cooperation to address the root causes of conflict and protect civilians.

[Resolution 2748 \(2024\)](#)

On 15 August 2024, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2748 at its 9708th meeting, addressing the situation in Somalia. The resolution reaffirms respect for Somalia's sovereignty and emphasizes the importance of consolidating peace and security gains. It extends the mandate of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) until 31 December 2024, authorizing the deployment of up to 12,626 uniformed personnel.



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The resolution also encourages continued international support for Somalia's security sector and outlines steps for transitioning from ATMIS to a proposed African Union-led peace support operation, the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). The Secretary-General is requested to report on the design and financing options for this successor mission by 15 November 2024, including a comprehensive exit strategy.

The resolution underlines the need for coordinated international assistance and calls for regular updates on the implementation of these measures, with a comprehensive update due by 11 October 2024.

UNITED NATIONS

[World News in Brief: Justice for Yazidis, South Sudan abductions, food prices hold steady](#)

Ten years after the Yazidi genocide in Sinjar, Iraq, by Dae'sh/ISIL, which devastated the 400,000-strong community, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria renewed calls for justice and accountability for ISIL's crimes. The Commission emphasized the immediate release of Yazidi survivors and victims held in northeast Syria's detention camps, where around 44,000 women and children, mostly foreigners, are detained indefinitely. ISIL's atrocities included genocide, mass executions, forced conversions, enslavement, and sexual violence. Following ISIL's territorial loss in Syria in 2019, many Yazidi women and girls remained detained alongside ISIL families. The UN urged nations to provide Yazidis with choices for return, reunification, or resettlement.

[World News in Brief: Terror attacks in Pakistan and Burkina Faso, Yemen floods update, mass graves in Libya](#)

A UN independent human rights expert, Ben Saul, condemned recent terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso, where 200 people were killed, and in Pakistan, where 28 civilians died. The attacks were claimed by Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), respectively. Saul urged both countries to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators fairly, stressing the importance of adhering to human rights and international humanitarian law during counter-terrorism operations. He also called on the governments to support the victims and urged Burkina Faso to re-engage with the international community to restore security. In Yemen, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) reported catastrophic flooding caused by heavy rains and the bursting of three dams, displacing over 1,000 families and damaging 56,000 homes across 20 governorates. The flooding has worsened the dire humanitarian situation, with 85% of displaced families unable to meet their daily food needs.

Meanwhile, in Libya, the UN's human rights office (OHCHR) raised concerns about ongoing impunity for mass killings, torture, and other atrocities committed by the Al-Kaniyat militia in Tarhuna. Despite evidence of mass graves and severe human rights violations, justice remains elusive, contributing to continued instability in the region.

[WHO chief convenes expert meeting on mpox spread](#)

The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) has convened an emergency meeting to address the mpox epidemic that has spread beyond the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to determine whether the outbreak constitutes a public health emergency of international concern, the UN agency's highest alert level.



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Mpox, or monkeypox, is endemic in West and Central Africa and is transmitted through physical contact with infected people or animals and through contaminated materials, and symptoms include rash, fever, headache, muscle and back pain, low energy and swollen lymph nodes which led to the declaration of a public health emergency in July 2022, ending in May 2023.

The DRC faced a severe mpox epidemic in 2024, with over 14 000 cases and 511 deaths reported, with the number of cases in the first half of 2024 equaling the total in 2023, and the epidemic spread to neighboring countries including Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda where over 50 cases were reported.

The current outbreak is caused by clade 1b, a new offshoot of clade 1, known to cause more severe disease than clade 2, which led to the global outbreak in 2022; clade 1a has emerged in the Central African Republic and the Republic of Congo, while clade 2 is present in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria and South Africa.

WHO is collaborating with affected governments, the African Center for Disease Control, NGOs and other partners to address the causes of the outbreak, launching a \$15 million regional response plan to strengthen surveillance, preparedness and response efforts.

Two mpox vaccines have received WHO-listed NRA approval, with recommendations from SAGE, being listed for emergency use to accelerate access to vaccines, particularly in low-income countries lacking NRA approval that allows global vaccine alliances Gavi and UNICEF to procure and distribute doses, similar to their efforts under the COVID-19 COVAX initiative.

Humanitarians urge Security Council to stop 'freight train of suffering' in Sudan

The United Nations (UN) has called for urgent action in response to the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, as the conflict between the Sudanese National Army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has led to widespread hunger and serious food insecurity. Humanitarian organizations, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), are working to provide essential aid and support to the millions of people affected by the ongoing violence.

The conflict started in April 2023, has displaced more than 10 million people, including 726,000 recently from Sennar state and famine conditions have been confirmed in the Zamzam refugee camp near El Fasher in North Darfur, affecting 500,000 residents, and there are suspicions of similar conditions in other camps nearby, where 26 million Sudanese are facing acute hunger, a situation further aggravated by the collapse of the national health system and the risk of outbreaks of epidemics due to recent heavy rains.

Testing swift responses to chemical terrorism threats

The UN Security Council has met to discuss the ongoing threat of ISIL/Da'esh, a specialized UN agency that has been helping Indonesia prepare for chemical terrorism attacks through realistic simulation exercises to find a coordinated response to the complex and tangible threat of chemical terrorism.

The exercise in Semarang, Indonesia simulated a chemical attack on a train highlighted the need for quick and effective responses and passengers simulated the symptoms of exposure as emergency teams, dressed in protective suits, responded by searching for bombs and providing medical assistance, part of a series of exercises organized by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Indonesian National Counter Terrorism Agency (BNPT), with the support of the National Police Mobile Brigade.



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Chemical terrorism has occurred at least eight times in Indonesia since 2011, where terrorist groups, including ISIL, have previously used chemical weapons in Iraq and Syria. The dual-use nature of industrial chemicals - chlorine is used in legitimate industries such as water treatment - adds complexity to the threat landscape, requiring robust cooperation between the government and private sectors.

Decontamination stations have been set up, assessing contamination levels and establishing perimeters, including scenarios as diverse as incidents in hotel rooms and airplanes, where participants encounter simulated hazardous materials, hostages and explosions and future training will focus on scene management to ensure proper collection and recording of evidence, essential for criminal prosecutions to identify and address operational gaps in a controlled environment, allowing for improved preparedness and response to real incidents.

Haiti: Millions of lives on the brink amid multiple crises

Underfunding and increased needs have left millions of Haitians facing chronic vulnerability, according to a new UN report, with OCHA stressing that reversing this trend requires increased funding from the international community and donors to support UN and NGO relief operations.

The humanitarian crisis in Haiti has worsened due to months of escalating violence, leading to a tripling in the number of displaced people, with nearly 600,000 people fleeing their homes, many of whom are seeking refuge in the southern regions, where already limited resources are further strained. Basic services are collapsing, with only 24% of hospitals operational and 1.5 million children unable to go to school.

The situation has been further exacerbated by forced deportations, with nearly 100,000 Haitians sent back from neighboring countries in the first seven months of 2024, gang violence between gangs and the authorities causing displacement and 300,000 cases of malnutrition, and half of Haiti's population of around five million people facing severe food insecurity.

OCHA warns that the crisis could widen as the active hurricane season approaches therefore OCHA is calling for urgent financial support to decrease the number of children at risk of recruitment by armed groups, with increased food insecurity and a lack of essential mental health and psychosocial services for vulnerable populations.

Haiti's 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan is only 33% funded, with \$162.5 million of the \$674 million needed.

Rights experts reveal impact of Poland's restrictive abortion laws on women

Women's rights in Poland are currently under threat because of restrictive abortion laws, which have led to "more avoidable deaths" as it has forced many women to carry unwanted pregnancies to term and they have resorted to illegal and unsafe abortions, according to a report by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The legal ban targets the right to assist women in obtaining abortions, with very few exceptions, and the general inaccessibility of services.

CEDAW described the situation as "gender-based violence against women" and said it could amount to "torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment" following a confidential inquiry in Poland to examine allegations of rights violations made by civil society organizations. The CEDAW report found that Poland's already restrictive legal framework has serious shortcomings in its implementation, including the reluctance of doctors to perform abortions due to fear of prosecution or personal moral and religious beliefs, making it extremely



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difficult for women to access safe abortion services; women face significant obstacles, particularly in cases where pregnancies result from criminal acts, due to a complex and unsupportive bureaucratic process, a situation compounded by the influence of powerful anti-abortion lobby groups, social stigmatization and threats to those who provide assistance, creating a "complex, hostile and frightening environment" in which access to safe abortion is almost impossible and women's health and lives are put at risk.

Poland's abortion laws cause severe mental and physical suffering, amounting to gender-based violence. Poland's Constitutional Court in 2020 banned abortion even in cases of fatal fetal abnormalities, a decision that leaves abortion legal only in cases where the pregnant woman's life is in danger or in cases of sexual assault. Poland has been urged to recognize abortion as a fundamental human right and to adopt a human rights-based approach to sexual and reproductive health through legal reforms aimed at decriminalizing and fully legalizing abortion.

[Internally displaced families in Yemen need increased aid: UNHCR](#)

The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, says millions of internally displaced families in Yemen are in urgent need of increased humanitarian assistance and the report, based on data from the first half of 2024, shows that 4.5 million people are displaced and a total of 18.2 million are in need of humanitarian aid. The UNHCR update is based on information provided by 47,000 families who have endured years of conflict where 84% of families surveyed are displaced, predominantly from the Al Hudaydah, Taizz and Hajjah regions, where continued instability forces them to move frequently.

Yemen has been embroiled in conflict for over a decade fighting Houthi rebels, supported by international allies on both sides. Despite a largely respected ceasefire, peace talks have made little progress, leaving the country in turmoil, and 85% of these families face food security problems, struggling to meet their daily food needs.

The report noted that every family surveyed has at least one vulnerable member or person with a disability, highlighting the increased need for protection in displaced communities.

Another significant challenge for these families is the lack of civil documentation, with just over half of the families interviewed having at least one child without a birth certificate, and over 70% of family members do not have a national identity card. Lack of documentation severely restricts access to essential services, education and other rights.

UNHCR is working to ensure the long-term stability of displaced families in Yemen by integrating essential services with longer-term shelter solutions such as transitional shelter units, rehabilitating homes and improving living conditions in host communities. Many families report not feeling safe upon returning home due to instability and lack of livelihood opportunities, among other challenges.

[Polio vaccines arrive in Gaza in boost to vaccination campaign: UNICEF](#)

The United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, has announced the delivery of 1.2 million doses of essential polio vaccines to Gaza, amid growing calls for humanitarian breaks to help hundreds of thousands of children at risk. More than 640,000 children are to receive the type two polio vaccine (nOPV).

The vaccination campaign is to be carried out in coordination with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) during "routine" humanitarian breaks.



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The effort comes as Gaza is in conflict following the October 7 attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian groups in southern Israel. The ongoing war has left more than 40,000 people dead, according to Gaza's health ministry, and devastated critical infrastructure, including hospitals and schools turned into shelters.

A case of polio has been confirmed in a 10-month-old baby in Gaza, the first case of polio in 25 years, and although there is no treatment for polio, vaccines can offer lifelong protection.

As the conflict continues, civilians in Gaza face continued hardship, where the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) has reported severe disruptions in water supplies due to ongoing military operations, with only three of 18 water wells in Deir Al-Balah still functioning, causing an 85% shortage in water supplies.

UNRWA highlighted the risk of other infectious diseases due to the disruption of water and sewage systems, even in hospitals and the World Health Organization (WHO) has provided essential medical supplies and intensive care beds to support Gaza's strained healthcare facilities.

The humanitarian zone, designated by Israel, currently covers only 11% of Gaza and is not suitable for habitation or service provision.

[Security Council debates Gaza as WHO announces polio pauses for lifesaving vaccination campaign](#)

The UN Security Council met in an [emergency session](#) to address the ongoing crisis in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, convened by the United Kingdom in response to worsening humanitarian conditions, the impact on civilian infrastructure, access to essential services and the first confirmed case of polio in Gaza in 25 years. The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced that an agreement has been reached with Israel to initiate a mass polio vaccination campaign in Gaza, which will begin in September through a series of humanitarian breaks.

OCHA, informed the Council that humanitarian efforts are focused on preventing the further spread of polio, and that the humanitarian response needs to be accelerated and unhindered due to the fragility of the health system in Gaza.

The Security Council meeting takes place against the backdrop of settler attacks in the West Bank and an attack on a World Food Program (WFP) team in Gaza, which led to the suspension of WFP operations in the enclave. UNRWA is coordinating with other UN agencies to distribute polio vaccines.

International reactions have included the UK's call for immediate action on agreed humanitarian pauses, Algeria's emphasis on the need to protect humanitarian workers, and Guyana's warning that history will judge the Council harshly if it does not act in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter and international law. The Council continues to deliberate on measures to mitigate the crisis and support the humanitarian response in Gaza and the occupied West Bank.

[UN food agency suspends staff movements in Gaza following attack](#)

The World Food Program (WFP) has suspended the movement of its staff in Gaza after an attack on a WFP team near an Israeli checkpoint, condemning the attack as "totally unacceptable" and urging the Israeli authorities and all parties to the conflict to ensure the safety of aid workers.

A clearly marked UN humanitarian vehicle, which was part of a convoy coordinated with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), was hit 10 times by IDF gunfire, including shots aimed at the front windows, highlighting the



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failure of current coordination systems to protect civilians and meet their essential needs, such as food, water, shelter and health, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The attack took place as the WFP team escorted a convoy of trucks carrying humanitarian goods into central Gaza, and despite receiving several permits from the Israeli authorities, the vehicle was hit by gunfire just meters from the IDF checkpoint at the Wadi Gaza Bridge.

Rising violence is severely compromising the delivery of vital assistance and restricted access and heightened risks have led to a drop in food supplies to those in desperate need.

Humanitarian actors in Gaza are under increasing threat, facing frequent evacuation orders disrupting food aid operations and WFP has lost access to its last operational warehouse in the central Gaza area and five WFP-operated community kitchens have had to be evacuated. On 25 August, the evacuation orders also affected WFP's main operational center in Deir Al-Balah, forcing a relocation for the third time since the beginning of the war. WFP called on all parties to respect international humanitarian law, protect aid workers and ensure the uninterrupted delivery of life-saving aid to Gaza.

[Guinea: Senior UN officials welcome verdict in 2009 stadium massacre trial](#)

A court in Conakry, Guinea, has convicted former President Moussa Dadis Camara and several military leaders of crimes against humanity for their involvement in the 2009 massacre at Conakry Stadium, where security forces killed at least 156 people and subjected over 109 women and girls to sexual violence. The court ordered reparations for the victims and their families, while four men were acquitted. UN officials, including Volker Türk and Pramila Patten, hailed the verdict as a significant step towards justice and accountability, emphasizing the need for continued efforts to combat impunity and support victims, as well as strengthening Guinea's judicial independence and transparency.

[Guterres strongly condemns Burkina Faso terror attack; hundreds killed and injured](#)

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has condemned the killing of around 200 people and injuring of 140 others in Barsalogo, Burkina Faso, during a weekend terror attack by the Al Qaeda-linked group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). This attack is part of a larger security crisis in Burkina Faso, exacerbated by armed groups moving in from neighboring Mali, leading to two military coups in 2022. The Secretary-General expressed his condolences to the victims' families and the people of Burkina Faso, calling for accountability for those responsible. The situation has put immense strain on the already vulnerable community of Barsalogo, which hosts around 90,000 displaced people, facing acute hunger and limited aid access due to ongoing insecurity.

[Flooding from Sudan dam collapse worsens humanitarian crisis](#)

Floodwaters from the collapsed Arba'at Dam in eastern Sudan have devastated around 70 villages, completely destroying 20, and severely affecting approximately 50,000 people, with at least 30 confirmed fatalities. The collapse has damaged infrastructure, including roads, electricity, telecommunications, wells, and schools, and has left over 10,000 livestock missing. This disaster adds to the suffering of communities already impacted by ongoing conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, which has caused widespread displacement and food shortages. Efforts are underway by provincial and federal teams, along with



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UN humanitarian agencies, to assess the damage and conduct search and rescue operations, despite challenging conditions.



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