

Press release

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European Parliament

Maria Arena calls on the Indian government to meet its human rights commitments

The Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, Maria Arena (S&D, BE), stated on Monday 5 October 2020:

"It is with great concern that I have been observing the rule of law deteriorate in India, which is the very corner stone of our special relationship.

Marginalised communities, religious minorities, particularly Muslims, a vocal and vibrant civil society and critics of government policies have been under increasing pressure for a long time. Widespread protests over the proposed citizenship verification process and the discriminatory citizenship law amendments have resulted in arbitrary detentions and an unnecessary loss of life. Journalists and other peaceful critics continue to be arrested under draconian counter-terrorism and sedition laws, while human rights defenders are unceasingly and severely targeted by the authorities.

An investigation carried out by Amnesty International India has unveiled grave human rights violations committed by the Delhi police during the February 2020 Delhi Riots. In the absence of action by India's authorities since the outbreak of the violence, I strongly support the call for a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into all human rights violations committed by law enforcement officials. There should also be a fully independent, public and transparent inquiry into the role of the police in failing to prevent the violence that broke out and even aiding it. Fighting impunity and promoting justice is the only way to stop and prevent police brutality. Most recently and very worryingly, Amnesty International India has been forced to announce that it is halting its work in India due to government reprisals.

As a sitting member of the Human Rights Council, India has pledged to "continue to foster the genuine participation and effective involvement of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights." Therefore, I call on the Indian government to meet this pledge, in a manner worthy of the global role model it aspires to be. It is high time for India to translate words into action. In this context, I also wish to call on the EU to address these concerns within the EU-India Human Rights Dialogue."

Background

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Recently, the UN Special Rapporteurs expressed concern over the human rights situation in India and called on the authorities to take immediate action.

India is the largest democracy in the world and an important global player with which the European Union enjoys a special bilateral relationship - the 2004 EU-India Strategic Partnership is based on shared values of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

On the occasion of the 15th European Union – India Summit, which was held on 15 July this year, the participants endorsed the "EU-India Strategic Partnership: A Roadmap to 2025", in which parties reaffirmed their commitment to promoting the shared values of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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Further information

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