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**International & European
Criminal Law Observatory**

ON CULTURAL ISSUES, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SECURITY

MONTHLY WRAP SEPTEMBER 2025

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

[Resolution 2791 \(2025\): Renews Sudan Sanctions](#)

On 12 September, the Security Council extended for another year the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime, including targeted sanctions and an arms embargo, amid divisions over whether to reference Sudan's worsening situation or limit the draft to a purely technical roll-over. Unanimously adopting resolution 2791 (2025), the Council — acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations — decided to extend, for the purpose of aligning the timelines for the renewal of the measures and the mandate of the Panel of Experts, the mandate of the Panel of Experts in resolution 2772 (2025) until 12 October 2026. It also requested the Panel to provide the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning Sudan with an interim report on its activities by 12 March 2026 and provide to the Council a final report by 13 July 2026 with its findings and recommendations.

[Resolution 2792 \(2025\): The situation between Iraq and Kuwait](#)

On 17 September, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to appoint a Senior Representative with a mandate focused solely on efforts to repatriate or return all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals — or their remains — and to ensure the return of Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. More than three decades after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing 1990–1991 Gulf War, many in both countries still do not know the fate of their family members. As the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) — which has been mandated to address the issue — draws down, members have been weighing options for a follow-on mechanism to ensure continued progress towards the final resolution of outstanding issues between the two countries. Unanimously adopting resolution 2792 (2025), the Council also requested the Secretary-General to keep it informed of progress by 31 March 2026, and every six months thereafter, and to make available his good offices to strengthen confidence and mutual trust between Iraq and Kuwait on missing persons and property.

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY



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Failure to end Gaza war undermining world's credibility, UN chief warns

On 23 September, UN Secretary-General António Guterres told the Security Council on that the crisis in Gaza has become “one of the darkest chapters of the Israeli Palestinian conflict, “with worsening suffering and deepening regional instability. “Countless Palestinian civilians and the remaining hostages are trapped under relentless bombardment and deprived of food, water, electricity, and medicine. Famine is a reality.” Mr. Guterres said.

He repeated his appeals for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages, and unhindered humanitarian access. The Secretary-General said the conflict is spreading beyond Gaza to the West Bank and the wider region, citing the Israeli strike on Qatar earlier this month as “not only a violation of Qatar’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” but also a threat to “the very norms and mechanisms we rely on for diplomacy and conflict resolution.”Turning to the political horizon, Mr. Guterres warned the two-State solution is eroding amid “relentless settlement expansion. De facto annexation. Forced displacement,” he said.

He called Israeli settlements “a flagrant violation of international law” and urged more international support to stabilise the Palestinian Authority, which he said is facing “an existential crisis” under fiscal and political pressure.

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS OFFICE OF THE HIGHT COMMISSIONER

Gaza: UN agencies warn of escalating attacks, mass displacement and famine

On 24 September UN agencies warned that civilians in the devastated Gaza Strip are facing escalating attacks, more mass displacement and worsening hunger. The UN human rights office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OHCHR) says Israeli military tactics in Gaza City – including strikes on homes and schools – are “inflicting terror” and forcing people to flee. Health services are also collapsing. A key clinic run by the Palestinian Medical Relief Society was destroyed, injuring staff and cutting off trauma, cancer and mental health care for hundreds of patients. Women and girls are particularly at risk, facing unsafe childbirth and rising gender-based violence as essential services disappear. OHCHR said that as the occupying power, Israel has an obligation to ensure food and medical



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supplies reach civilians. UN human rights chief Volker Türk called on Israel to urgently lift the blockade and allow lifesaving aid in by the fastest means possible.

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Military spending threatens global pace and development

The world is witnessing a global increasing in military spending, which hit 2.7 trillion USD in 2024 and is projected to reach 6.6 trillion USD by 2035. Global military expenditures are rising both in absolute figures and as a proportion of the worldwide economy. Rising military spending is expected to add to already high levels of public debt, burdening future generations and limiting their development. Military spending creates jobs, but civilian sectors can generate more: \$1 billion produces about 11,200 military jobs versus 26,700 in education, 16,800 in clean energy, and 17,200 in health care. Redirecting 15% of global military funds (\$387 billion) could cover annual climate adaptation costs for developing nations and lower emissions, as military dollars emit over twice as much greenhouse gases compared to civilian investments.

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)

Environmental damage in Gaza Strip harms human health

A new UNEP report finds an unprecedented levels of environmental damage in the Gaza Strip, following years of conflict: the soil, freshwater supplies and coastline are damaged. Gaza's freshwater is scarce and largely polluted, worsened by failing sewage systems, damaged pipes, and cesspit use, leading to further aquifer contamination. Marine and coastal areas are likely also polluted, but current testing is not possible. The water crisis has spiked infectious diseases—acute watery diarrhoea has increased 36-fold, and acute jaundice syndrome (hepatitis A) 384-fold. Since 2023, Gaza has lost most of its vegetation, making large-scale food production unfeasible; over 500,000 people face famine and about a million more face food emergencies. Around 78% of the region's 250,000 buildings have been damaged or destroyed, creating 61 million tonnes of debris, some of which may



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be contaminated if not properly managed. Vegetation loss and land compaction have degraded soil, raised flood risk, and hindered groundwater recharge.

UNEP has elaborated an assessment including 30 recommendations for reversing damages to the environment. Key tasks are quickly rebuilding water and sewage systems, testing Gaza's soil for contamination, recycling debris where possible, and disposing of munitions safely. The assessment notes that environmental recovery in Gaza requires careful, inclusive, and science-based planning.

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (UNRWA)

Famine confirmed in Gaza

Over 500,000 people in Gaza are experiencing famine, with starvation and preventable deaths rising, according to a new IPC analysis. Famine conditions are expected to spread to Deir Al Balah and Khan Younis soon. UN agencies warn that immediate, large-scale humanitarian aid is needed as hunger-related deaths and malnutrition worsen, especially with hundreds of thousands going days without food. The threat of intensified conflict could worsen civilian suffering, particularly for vulnerable groups unable to evacuate.

By the end of September, more than 640,000 people in Gaza will face catastrophic food insecurity (IPC Phase 5), with over 1.14 million at emergency levels (Phase 4) and 396,000 in crisis (Phase 3). North Gaza's conditions are likely as severe as Gaza City, but limited data prevents official classification.

U.N. agencies called for an immediate, sustained ceasefire in Gaza to halt violence, ensure safe release of hostages, and enable large-scale humanitarian aid. They highlighted the urgent need for increased food assistance, better distribution, shelter, fuel, cooking gas, and food production support. Restoring health services and commercial flows is essential to prevent famine and revive local markets and services.

Situation after more than 700 days since the start of the war

Between 11 and 16 September, UNRWA reported direct or indirect strikes on 12 premises in Gaza City, including nine schools and two health centres hosting over 11,000 people. Five displaced



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persons were injured, and the field office suffered further damage. Ongoing attacks have led to reduced UNRWA activities and forced the suspension of its only working health centre north of Wadi Gaza. Infrastructure destruction and restricted humanitarian access are severely limiting aid for civilians. More than 28.000 cases of acute malnutrition have been identified among children younger than 5 years old: the malnutrition cases registered in July and August are exceeding the combined total of malnutrition cases identified in the first six months of 2025.

The Israeli Forces further tightened movement and access restrictions in the West Bank during this reporting period, including the installation of new road gates to control the movement of Palestinians in and out of communities across the area.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

[ICC concludes confirmation of charges hearing in Kony case](#)

The 10th of September 2025, the confirmation of charges hearing in *The Prosecutor v. Joseph Kony* finished before Pre-Trial Chamber III of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The hearing was held in the absence of the suspect, who was represented by defence counsel. The purpose of the confirmation of charges hearing and whether they are confirmed, in whole or in part, the case will be transferred to a Trial Chamber, which will conduct the next stage of the proceedings: the trial. After hearing the introductory statements, observations on the merits and final observations of the prosecution, the judges will now begin their deliberations. In accordance with rule 53 of the Rules of Court, the Pre-Trial Chamber shall issue its written decision within 60 days from the date of conclusion of the confirmation hearing. The Pre-Trial Chamber may then: confirm the charges for which it has determined that sufficient evidence exists and return the suspect to trial before a Trial Chamber. In this case a trial would still require the presence of Mr. Kony before the ICC since there is no trial in absentia under the Rome Statute of the ICC; refuse to confirm the charges for which he has determined that there is insufficient evidence and discontinue the proceedings against Mr. Kony; adjourn the hearing and request the Prosecutor to provide further evidence conduct further investigations or amend any allegation for which the evidence presented appears to show that a crime other than the one charged has been committed. The Defence and the Prosecutor cannot appeal this decision directly.



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[Trial Judgment in Abd-Al-Rahman case on 6 October 2025](#)

On 6 October 2025, the ICC Trial Chamber I will issue its judgement of conviction or acquittal in the Prosecutor's case against Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman ("Ali Kushayb"). The judgement will be read publicly in room I of the International Criminal Court and the hearing will be broadcast live through the ICC website. Under article 74 of the Rome Statute, judges shall acquit or convict the accused. The accused before the ICC is presumed innocent. While the prosecution must prove the guilt of the accused, the Trial Chamber will convict him only if it finds that the charges have been proven beyond a reasonable doubt. The Chamber shall base its decision solely on the applicable law and on the evidence presented and discussed before it during the trial. In response to the verdict, the parties may appeal the decision to the ICC Appeals Chamber. Judges ensure fairness of trial and respect for the rights of both parties and victims. Introduction: Mr. Abd-Al-Rahman is charged with 31 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Darfur, the Sudan, between August 2003 and March 2004. The trial in the case opened before Trial Chamber I on 5 April 2022. A total of 74 witnesses testified during the trial.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE (COE)

[Register of Damage for Ukraine announces launch of claims categories concerning the forcible transfer or deportation of children and adults](#)

The Register of Damage for Ukraine has launched two new claims categories — A2.8 and A2.9 — for cases of forcible transfer or deportation of children and adults resulting from the Russian Federation's internationally wrongful acts. Category A2.8 applies to children under 18 who were forcibly transferred within Ukraine or deported abroad, including to Russia or third countries, after 24 February 2022. Category A2.9 covers adults subjected to similar transfers or deportations during the same period. Each affected individual may submit one claim, supported by available evidence; parents may file claims on behalf of their minor children through the Civil Status Register. Claims can be submitted via the Ukrainian government's Diia web portal, which provides secure digital access to public services. Council of Europe Special Envoy Thórdís Kolbrún Reykþjard Gylfadóttir



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said the new categories recognize victims' suffering and mark a further step toward justice and Ukraine's sustainable reconstruction.

[The Council of Europe updates mutual assistance provisions in criminal matters](#)

The Council of Europe has opened for signature the new Valletta Protocol to the 1959 Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, during the Conference of Ministers of Justice held under the Maltese Presidency. The Protocol modernizes cooperation procedures, introduces new types of requests, and promotes the use of digital tools to make assistance faster, more efficient, and better suited to today's technological challenges, while safeguarding human rights. According to Deputy Secretary General Bjørn Berge, international cooperation is essential to counter increasingly sophisticated criminal networks and to strengthen trust in judicial systems. Key improvements include simplified procedures, an expanded scope of requests, wider use of electronic communication and video conferencing, use of technical surveillance tools, and defined response times. Signed by 16 States, the Protocol represents a major step forward in modernizing international judicial cooperation.

[Progress made on measures preventing central-government corruption in Portugal](#)

The Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) acknowledged Portugal's progress in preventing corruption at the highest levels of central government and within law-enforcement agencies, while stressing that further measures are required. Out of 28 recommendations issued in 2023, 18 have been only partially implemented and 10 remain unimplemented. GRECO welcomed the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Mechanism, the Entity for Transparency, and the new government code of conduct. However, it urged authorities to strengthen integrity controls, adopt the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2025–2028 and a specific risk-prevention plan for executive officials, clarify gift rules, and ensure public access to asset declarations. For law-enforcement bodies, GRECO noted progress with new codes of conduct and whistleblowing channels but called for better gender balance, confidential counselling, regular vetting, and increased staffing at the Inspectorate General for Internal Affairs. Portugal is expected to report on progress by 30 September 2026.

[GRECO calls on Slovakia to step up reforms to prevent corruption within the central government and the police](#)



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The Council of Europe's GRECO calls on the Slovak Republic to take determined action to implement outstanding recommendations on corruption prevention and integrity for senior government officials and the police. Requirements include rules on interactions with lobbyists, adoption of lobbying legislation, gift rules, asset declarations, post-employment restrictions, integrity checks for state secretaries and political advisers, and a dedicated anti-corruption plan. The new government's manifesto envisages some measures aligned with these recommendations. For the police, progress is limited: post-employment restrictions and integrity/asset controls have not been adopted, though the explanatory guide on the code of ethics is acknowledged. GRECO highlights the need for an independent complaints mechanism and an effective internal whistleblower channel. Out of 21 recommendations from the 5th Round Evaluation Report (2019), 5 have been fully implemented, 4 partially, and 12 remain unimplemented. The Slovak Republic is requested to report on progress by 30 June 2026.

Significant progress in measures to prevent corruption in the central government in Cyprus

GRECO (Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption) notes significant progress in Cyprus in preventing corruption and promoting integrity in central government and law-enforcement agencies, while stressing the need for further reforms. Of 22 recommendations issued in 2023, 6 have been fully implemented, 13 partially, and 3 remain unimplemented. Positives include adoption of codes of conduct for senior government officials, training sessions, an e-government platform for public consultation, and practical guides on lobbying and financial transparency. GRECO calls for a coordinated integrity strategy, reform of confidential advice mechanisms, review of post-employment rules, strengthening the Anti-Corruption Authority, and streamlining oversight bodies. For the police, the report welcomes measures on asset declarations, whistleblower protection, and reporting channels, but urges improvements in gender balance, transparency in appointments, and disciplinary mechanisms. Cyprus is expected to report on implementation progress by 31 December 2026.

European countries come together to fight organised crime

Justice Ministers of the Council of Europe, under Malta's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, adopted a declaration to enhance cooperation against transnational crime and opened the Valletta Protocol, an additional protocol to the Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, for signature.



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Secretary General Alain Berset emphasized that organised crime exploits digital technology and crosses borders, requiring strong international cooperation. The protocol updates the 1959 procedures and introduces digital tools to speed up and secure communications, including video hearings for victims and experts. Common standards for the safe and responsible use of technology are promoted, respecting human rights, data protection, and procedural safeguards. Judicial dialogue, exchange of best practices, training, and cooperation among central authorities, prosecutors, and courts are encouraged. Member states aim to collaborate with other international organisations to combat serious crimes such as cybercrime, money laundering, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation of children. Key principles: mutual assistance, reciprocity, and respect for human rights under national, European, and international standards.

[GRECO highlights the need for effective systems for accessing official documents to fight corruption](#)

Ahead of the International Day for Universal Access to Information on 28 September, GRECO published a thematic paper on the right to access information, highlighting its importance in combating corruption, enhancing government accountability, and enabling citizen participation. The paper reviews regulations, institutional frameworks, and compliance with national laws based on GRECO's fifth-round evaluations of central government and law-enforcement agencies. It stresses the key role of journalists in exposing corruption, while noting legal and political pressures that may restrict their work and the public's right to information. Good practices include appointing information officers, issuing clear guidelines, internal systems for requests, independent oversight bodies, and sanctions for non-compliance. Identified obstacles include delays, insufficient proactive disclosure, overly broad restrictions, weak oversight, limited data, and low public awareness. Recommendations: adopt access-to-information legislation, ensure proactive transparency, strengthen independent oversight, and limit exceptions. GRECO urges member states to accede to the Tromsø Convention and will continue monitoring access-to-information issues in its sixth evaluation round at the sub-national level.

THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL POLICE ORGANIZATION (INTERPOL)

[Record-setting synthetic drug seizures in INTERPOL-coordinated operation](#)



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An international operation against synthetic drug trafficking seized 76 tonnes of drugs worth USD 6.5 billion, including 51 tonnes of methamphetamine (297 million ‘yaba’ pills), fentanyl, heroin, cocaine, and precursors. The operation (30 June – 13 July 2025) spanned 18 countries in Asia and North America, coordinated by an Operational Coordination Unit in Colombo, Sri Lanka. A total of 386 arrests were made, including an INTERPOL Red Notice suspect awaiting extradition to South Korea. Authorities dismantled darknet syndicates such as India’s “Ketamelon,” seizing LSD, ketamine, digital assets, vehicles, weapons, and drug production equipment. Myanmar saw 22 kg of heroin hidden behind pineapples and 9.25 million yaba pills seized. Lao PDR yielded 3.9 tonnes of methamphetamine and 10 production machines. Mexican authorities seized 1.7 tonnes of meth and 190,000 fentanyl tablets, while the U.S. intercepted MDMA laced with fentanyl. Indonesia seized 116 kg of xylazine. Authorities also detected nitazenes, highly potent synthetic opioids, including metonitazene and protonitazene, posing extreme public health risks. Criminals concealed drugs in everyday items: surfboards, espresso machines, powdered tea, and cat food, prompting INTERPOL Purple Notices for emerging concealment methods. The operation was funded by the Korean National Police Agency, with participation from 18 countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, Canada, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Korea (Rep. of), Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United States, and Vietnam.

USD 439 million recovered in global financial crime operation

INTERPOL coordinated Operation HAECHE VI (April–August 2025) across 40 countries and territories, targeting cyber-enabled financial crimes, including voice phishing, romance scams, sextortion, investment fraud, money laundering linked to online gambling, business email compromise, and e-commerce fraud. The operation recovered USD 342 million in government-backed currencies and USD 97 million in physical and virtual assets. Authorities blocked over 68,000 bank accounts and froze nearly 400 cryptocurrency wallets, recovering an additional USD 16 million in illicit crypto profits. Key actions included dismantling syndicates diverting social security funds in Portugal (45 arrests, EUR 228,000 recovered), disrupting impersonation scams in Macao and Malaysia, and seizing USD 6.6 million in stolen assets in Thailand through a transnational business email compromise scam. The Korean National Police Agency and Emirati authorities used INTERPOL’s I-GRIP stop-payment mechanism to recover KRW 6.6 billion (USD 3.91 million) sent to a fraudulent Dubai account. INTERPOL highlighted the importance of global cooperation, rapid



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information exchange, and proactive interventions to recover criminal proceeds and safeguard financial systems.

[260 suspected scammers arrested in pan-African cybercrime operation](#)

Authorities in 14 African countries carried out a coordinated international operation against cyber-enabled crime, resulting in 260 arrests and the seizure of 1,235 electronic devices. The operation focused on transnational networks exploiting digital platforms, particularly social media, to commit romance scams and sextortion, manipulating victims and defrauding them financially. During Operation Contender 3.0, investigators identified IP addresses, domains, and social media profiles linked to the criminals, leading to the takedown of 81 cybercrime infrastructures across Africa. In total, 1,463 victims were identified, with estimated losses of nearly USD 2.8 million. In Ghana, authorities arrested 68 individuals and recovered part of the funds, while in Senegal a network impersonating celebrities defrauded 120 victims. In Côte d'Ivoire, criminals coerced 809 victims into sharing intimate images for blackmail, and in Angola, eight suspects were arrested for targeting 28 victims using fraudulent identities. The operation involved private sector partners for enhanced data sharing and was funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office as part of the African Joint Operation against Cybercrime project. INTERPOL highlighted the growing threat of digital-enabled crimes across Africa, emphasizing the importance of international cooperation to protect victims and dismantle criminal networks.

EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION (EUROPOL)

[From crypto-enabled money laundering to online recruitment of minors: European Police Chiefs tackle criminal threats](#)

The European Police Chiefs Convention (EPCC) 2025 took place in The Hague with over 400 police chiefs and senior officials from 53 countries and 13 international organizations. The conference addressed Europe's main security threats, with keynotes from Europol and European Commission representatives. Two main panels focused on criminal use of technology: Crime-as-a-Service, highlighting online recruitment of minors and the need for centralized investigative structures, prevention, international cooperation, and platform accountability. The second, Follow the Money, analyzed digital financial crime, including crypto assets, fintech, and decentralized finance,



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emphasizing investigative tools, cross-border cooperation, and public–private partnerships. The event featured bilateral meetings, strategic discussions on Europol and European security, and the Directors General of Customs meeting. The Europol Excellence in Innovation Awards recognized initiatives from Portugal, Germany, and Norway in ethics, diversity, innovative operations, and technical innovation.

8 arrested in a crackdown on human trafficking network active across continents

Europol coordinated a joint action between the Brazilian Federal Police and An Garda Síochána against a criminal network involved in sexual exploitation of South American victims, active in Ireland and several EU Member States. The network, mainly composed of Brazilian nationals, is also investigated for document forgery, money laundering, and other economic crimes. The operation led to 33 house searches (29 in Brazil, 4 in Ireland) and 8 arrests (4 in Brazil, 4 in Ireland, including the main organiser). 28 victims were identified, and assets seized included 6 luxury vehicles, bank accounts, watches, a crypto wallet with at least EUR 50,000, digital equipment, and documents. The investigation revealed a transnational network active since 2017, involved in recruitment, transport, accommodation, and sexual exploitation of women. The criminal activities generated several million euros in illegal profits. Europol provided analytical support, coordination, information exchange, and deployed two experts on-site for real-time technical assistance.

Europol supports operation leading to 12 arrests in Ecuador

Europol supported a joint operation between Belgian authorities and the Ecuadorian National Police against a criminal network trafficking cocaine from South America to Europe. The operation led to 26 arrests across several countries and the seizure of over 9.3 tonnes of cocaine. The network used private security companies to recruit trusted personnel and acquire armored vehicles and firearms, later diverted to local criminal groups in Ecuador. Recent operational phase: 3 September 2025 in Guayaquil, 12 arrests (11 Ecuadorians, 1 Serbian), 21 house searches, seizures of 3 armored vehicles, 5 firearms, USD 27,000, and 7 electronic devices. Investigation launched in 2020 in Belgium, with 14 arrests and 4.6 tonnes of cocaine seized during the first phase. Previous raids led to a total seizure of 9,344 kg of cocaine across Ecuador, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The investigation relied on Sky ECC encrypted communications and also targeted links to a Western Balkans criminal group. Europol



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provided analytical support, facilitated information exchange, and coordinated cooperation between Europe and Latin America.

Dozens of sex trafficking victims in Austria – five arrests in Colombia

Austrian and Colombian authorities, with Europol support, dismantled a criminal network trafficking Colombian women for sexual exploitation in Europe. Raids in Medellin on 5 September 2025 led to the arrest of five suspects; additional arrests were made in Spain and Austria. The network was headed by an Austrian Turkish suspect currently at large. Victims, mostly Colombian nationals, were lured to Europe, forced into prostitution, and advertised on adult websites. The traffickers used coercion, deception, severe physical violence, and threats against victims' families to maintain control. Some members posed as clients to supervise victims and ensure compliance with financial rules. One former member who tried to escape was murdered in Colombia. Europol provided analytical support, coordinated cross-border cooperation, and traced illicit funds through financial channels. Action day operations included an on-site Europol expert to cross-check information in real time. The investigation was supported by the EU-funded @ON Network and EMPACT, led by the Italian DIA.

4 arrests for smuggling over 600 migrants across the Western Balkans

A joint investigation by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia dismantled a criminal network smuggling migrants along the Western Balkans route. The operation, conducted under Europol's Operational Task Force (OTF), led on 17 September 2025 to the arrest of the network leader and three other suspects, with nine searches and seizures of electronic equipment and small amounts of drugs. The network facilitated over 100 smuggling incidents, involving more than 600 migrants, mainly recruited by Croatian organisers and transported by drivers from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and other Central and Eastern European countries. Migrants entered Bosnia and Herzegovina legally and were then transported to the Bosnian-Croatian border, crossing on foot with the assistance of guides. In Croatia, they were temporarily accommodated, mainly in the Split area, before being moved to other EU countries. The network relied on encrypted communication channels to coordinate operations and maintain secrecy. Europol coordinated the investigation, facilitated information exchange, provided analytical support, and deployed an expert on-site in Croatia to cross-check operational data in real time, enhancing the operational impact of the joint action.



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EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

[Judgment *M.P. and Others v. Greece* - Domestic courts must examine the appropriateness of hearing the child before ruling on his or her return to a parent in child abduction cases, application no. 2068/24](#)

The *MP and Others v. Greece* case concerned a mother and her two children, who complained about the return of the two children to their father in the United States by order of Greek courts in international child abduction proceedings. In today's Chamber ruling in this case, the Court found, by 5 votes to 2, that there had been a violation of article 8 (right to respect for private and family life) of the Convention. The Court held that the Greek courts had assessed the situation without considering whether it was appropriate to ascertain the views of the children, which were, after all, a fundamental consideration. Accordingly, it considered that the Greek courts had been unable to make an informed assessment of the existence of a "serious risk" to children under article 13 of the Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, and that the decision-making process under domestic law had not met the procedural requirements inherent in article 8 of the Convention. The forced return of the two children to the United States could therefore not be considered necessary in a democratic society. This is the first case concerning child abduction proceedings where the Court has held that national courts are required to examine of their own motion whether it is appropriate to hear the child, directly or otherwise, with a view, if necessary, to excluding that possibility in a reasoned decision.

[Judgment *Scuderoni v. Italy* - Fresh finding against Italy for failing to protect woman from domestic violence, systematically playing down her complaints, application no. 6045/24](#)

The *Scuderoni v. Italy* case concerned domestic violence suffered by a woman for nine months after separation from her partner. In today's ruling by the Chamber in this case the Court held, unanimously, that there had been a violation of article 3 (prohibition of ill-treatment) and article 8 (right to respect for private life and correspondence) of the Convention. The Court held that the authorities had failed to fulfil their duty to make an immediate and proactive assessment of the risk of the applicant's former partner subjecting her to further violence. In particular, the applicant's application for a protection order had been rejected without any risk assessment having been carried out and the civil court had set the date of the hearing at nine months from the submission of the urgent application. There had also been a two-month delay before his criminal complaint was registered. The Court also held that,



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given the way in which the authorities had dealt with the evidence previously, they had failed to take into account the specific issue of domestic violence during criminal investigations. In so doing, they had failed in their obligation to provide a response commensurate with the seriousness of the applicant's allegations. The domestic courts had made no serious attempt to obtain a complete view of the applicant's situation, despite the fact that that was a requirement in those types of cases. This ruling is the latest of several findings against Italy in recent years for failure to fulfil its obligations under the Convention regarding domestic violence.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

[Iran sanctions snapback: Council reimposes restrictive measures](#)

The Council decides to reimpose a series of restrictive measures concerning Iran's nuclear proliferation activities, previously suspended under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA). The decision follows the reinstatement of UN sanctions after the Security Council declines to extend their suspension, subsequent to the E3 (France, Germany, and the United Kingdom) triggering the "snapback" mechanism provided by the JCPoA.

The reintroduced measures include both UN-mandated sanctions, automatically transposed into EU law, and EU autonomous measures. They cover travel bans and asset freezes for designated individuals and entities, as well as prohibitions on providing funds or economic resources to them. Economic and financial restrictions target trade, finance, and transport sectors.

Trade measures include bans on arms exports to Iran and on the transfer of items that could support nuclear or ballistic activities. They also prohibit imports and transport of crude oil, natural gas, and petrochemical products; sales of key energy equipment, gold, precious metals, diamonds, specific naval equipment, and certain software.

Financial measures restore the freezing of assets belonging to the Central Bank of Iran and major Iranian commercial banks. In the transport sector, the EU reinstates bans on Iranian cargo aircraft access to EU airports and on maintenance or servicing of Iranian cargo aircraft or vessels involved in prohibited activities.

The background recalls that the JCPoA, endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231 (2015), aimed to ensure Iran's nuclear programme remained peaceful. The EU had lifted its nuclear-related



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sanctions in 2015, with a commitment to reintroduce them in case of Iranian non-compliance. Following the E3's assessment of Iran's significant non-performance and the absence of a new UN resolution preventing the "snapback," the sanctions regime is reinstated.

[Israel/Palestine: Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the closure of the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge crossing](#)

The Israeli authorities' closure of the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge crossing for passengers and cargo restricts movement between the West Bank and Jordan and hinders the humanitarian response in Gaza. The EU notes the planned reopening for passengers and urges Israel to also permit cargo transit, stressing that all border crossings must remain open to ensure effective humanitarian aid delivery. A significant share of relief items entering Gaza through the UN 2720 mechanism passes via Jordan.

The ground offensive in Gaza City is worsening an already dire humanitarian situation, with high civilian casualties and suffering. The EU emphasizes that medical facilities must not be targeted and calls on Israel to take concrete measures to allow more humanitarian assistance into Gaza.

The EU condemns the 18 September attack at the crossing, reaffirming Israel's right to self-defence within the bounds of international law. It calls for restraint, an immediate ceasefire, and the unconditional release of all hostages.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

[Parliament pushes for Gaza aid, the hostages' release and justice](#)

The European Parliament condemns Israel's obstruction of humanitarian aid, accusing it of creating famine conditions in Northern Gaza, and calls for all border crossings to be opened. It demands the urgent reinstatement of UNRWA's full mandate and funding, with strong oversight, and rejects the current aid distribution system. MEPs express deep concern over critical shortages of food, water, medicine, and shelter, urging unrestricted humanitarian access and the restoration of essential infrastructure in line with international law.

Parliament calls for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the unconditional release of all Israeli hostages, and greater EU diplomatic pressure on third countries to influence Hamas. While condemning Hamas's "barbaric crimes" and supporting sanctions against the group, MEPs reaffirm



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Israel's right to self-defence in accordance with international law but stress that it cannot justify indiscriminate military actions in Gaza. They also denounce Hamas's use of civilians as human shields.

The resolution supports suspending parts of the EU-Israel trade agreement and bilateral aid, urging full investigations into war crimes and accountability for all violations of international law. It endorses sanctions against violent Israeli settlers and activists, as well as against ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

Parliament reaffirms support for a two-State solution, urging diplomatic progress ahead of the UN General Assembly. It calls for Gaza's complete demilitarisation, the exclusion of Hamas from governance, and the reinstatement of a reformed Palestinian Authority as the legitimate governing body. MEPs emphasize that establishing a Palestinian State is essential for lasting peace, Israel's security, and regional stability, encouraging EU member states to consider formal recognition of Palestine.

Human rights violations in Cyprus, Rwanda and Togo

The European Parliament adopts three emergency resolutions addressing Cyprus, Rwanda, and Togo. Cyprus. Parliament condemns Türkiye's ongoing illegal occupation of northern Cyprus, describing it as a violation of international law and a major obstacle to peace and EU-Türkiye relations. MEPs denounce the politically motivated detention of five Greek Cypriot citizens who were arrested after visiting their properties in Galatia, calling it an act of intimidation by the occupying regime. They urge the EU to support the Republic of Cyprus and its citizens through concrete measures, including possible sanctions against those responsible.

Rwanda. Parliament demands the immediate and unconditional release of opposition leader Victoire Ingabire, denouncing her trial as unfair and politically motivated. MEPs express deep concern over human rights abuses targeting opposition figures, journalists, and civil society members. They call on Rwanda to ensure freedom of expression, political pluralism, and fair elections, and urge the European Commission to review aid to institutions involved in arbitrary detentions and torture.

Togo. Parliament calls for the unconditional release of Irish-Togolese citizen Abdul Aziz Goma, who has been subjected to torture and unlawful detention. MEPs urge Togolese authorities to allow his medical evacuation, annul his conviction, and implement reforms in the prison system. They



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emphasize the need to protect freedom of assembly and expression, warning that the arbitrary imprisonment of political opponents undermines the rule of law and democracy in Togo.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

[Commissioner Brunner meets Expert Group on Migrants' Views to advance EU migration policies](#)

Commissioner Brunner convenes the 14th meeting of the Commission Expert Group on the views of migrants, focusing on the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum and the protection of migrant workers' rights in the EU. It is the first meeting between the Commissioner and the group, which advises the European Commission on migration policies from the perspective of migrants.

The Expert Group, made up of representatives of migrant organisations and independent migration experts, offers essential input to ensure that EU migration policies are practical and responsive to real needs. Many members have personal migration experience, adding valuable insight to policy development.

During the two-day meeting, Commissioner Brunner outlines the Commission's migration priorities and highlights the group's role in supporting their implementation. Discussions center on the Pact on Migration and Asylum, resettlement initiatives, and safeguarding the rights of migrant workers.

OLAF

[From OLAF investigation to EPPO condemnation: joint efforts deliver results in Croatia](#)

One of the first complementary investigations by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), conducted in close collaboration with the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO), led to a second conviction. The case, closed by OLAF in 2022, concerned the award of a contract for a "strategic management" information system in Croatia, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. OLAF's complementary investigation focused on a public procurement procedure awarded in 2018. Allegations of favouritism and manipulation of tenders by the public authority prompted OLAF to open an administrative investigation. During the investigation, OLAF reported the case to the EPPO, which launched its own criminal investigation. OLAF, in cooperation with the EPPO,



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therefore simultaneously carried out on-the-spot checks, combined with computer forensics operations, at the headquarters of the consortium's lead partner and at the public authority benefiting from EU funds. In addition, both Offices shared the results of the preliminary analysis of the material collected. OLAF's investigations revealed potential collusion between the public authority and the economic operator, aimed both at increasing the value of the public procurement procedure and at ensuring that the contract was awarded to the chosen economic operator. In particular, when the contract was awarded, the consortium's lead partner had only a minimum capacity to carry out such a project. Following these joint efforts, OLAF recommended to the European Commission the recovery of €1.4 million, while the EPPO indicted several high-ranking officials in Croatia.

EUROJUST

[Dr. Filippo Spiezia takes on the new role of National Member for Italy](#)

Dr. Filippo Spiezia (62) returns to Eurojust as National Member for Italy, after a two-year mandate as Chief Prosecutor of Florence. Dr. Spiezia is a highly experienced Italian magistrate, with extensive expertise in anti-mafia and anti-terrorism matters and a legal expert in cross-border judicial cooperation. Between 2016 and 2023 he was also a National Member for Italy of Eurojust. During this period, he also served as Vice President of the Agency from 2016 to 2020.

EPPO

[EPPO in Italy: house arrests and seizures for €17 million VAT fraud](#)

At the request of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) of Rome (Italy), the Guardia di Finanza (Economic and Financial Police Unit of Bolzano) carried out preventive searches and seizures in Rome and Brescia, as part of an investigation into a VAT fraud of 17 million euros involving electronic products. One person, considered the "de facto" manager of several companies involved, was placed under house arrest in Rome. Three other suspects, who acted as frontmen for the scam, were banned from carrying out business management activities. Preventive seizures ordered by the Court of Rome amounted to over 17.7 million euros and include bank accounts, credit cards,



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cash, vehicles, motorcycles, three Rolex watches and other assets. In total, seven searches were carried out to recover assets and evidence of further financial flows. The investigation concerns a criminal group allegedly responsible, since 2017, for massive VAT fraud in the wholesale and retail trade of electronic products, involving companies based in Italy and other EU member states.

EUROPEAN BORDER AND COAST GUARD AGENCY (FRONTEX)

Frontex co-leads a multipurpose maritime drill in the Baltic Sea

On 28 August, two passengers on a catamaran were arrested for endangering others, and 1 kg of marijuana was discovered during a body search conducted by Estonian authorities in cooperation with Frontex. A fire on board caused panic among approximately 50 passengers, some of whom jumped into the sea. The passengers were safely evacuated and transported to Hundipea Harbour (Tallinn) for medical triage and assistance.

These events were part of the Multipurpose Maritime Exercise (MME) BRACE Estonia 2025, co-led by Frontex and Estonia, with participation from the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA). This is Estonia's first live exercise within the framework of EU cooperation and the Multipurpose Maritime Operation (MMO) Baltic Sea 2025.

Since 2022, Frontex has been collaborating with EFCA and EMSA on drills covering maritime border control, fisheries inspections, maritime safety, environmental protection, and oil pollution response. The exercise aims to keep the seas safe, enforce laws at sea, prevent cross-border crime, and train teams in Search and Rescue operations, simulating complex scenarios to test readiness for various challenges in the Baltic Sea.

EU external borders: irregular crossings down 21% in the first 8 months of 2025

Significant drops on the Western Balkan (-47%), Eastern Land Border (-44%), and Western African (-52%) routes.

Central Mediterranean remains the busiest route, accounting for 37% of all irregular entries.

Western Mediterranean recorded a 22% increase in irregular entries.

Most frequently reported nationalities: Bangladeshi, Egyptian, and Afghan.



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[Frontex launches updated Contingency Planning Handbook to help Member States move from alert to action during border crises](#)

Frontex has released the second edition of its Handbook on Contingency Planning for Border Management and Return, a practical reference designed to help EU Member States and Schengen-associated countries activate, test and refine national contingency plans for high migratory influxes and other crises at the EU's external borders.

The updated edition translates recognised international practice into a clear, four-phase cycle and now includes guidance on return to provide a fully integrated approach.

The Handbook supports national authorities and Frontex Liaison Officers in designing and testing contingency plans, running simulations, and following up on vulnerability assessment recommendations. It clarifies who does what, when and how, helping to align activation to early warning signs, and coordinate activities across agencies and borders.

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGION

[Committee of the Regions launches Working Group on Defence to strengthen regions' role in EU security](#)

Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, together with rising hybrid threats, has profoundly reshaped the EU's approach to defence and security, accelerating efforts towards a more responsive policy. In this context, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has officially launched its Working Group on Defence (WG Defence), aiming to integrate regional and local perspectives into EU defence and strengthen Europe's resilience through territorial contributions to defence readiness, civil protection, crisis response, and a competitive defence industry.

Chaired by Fernando López Miras (ES/EPP), President of the Region of Murcia, the WG Defence provides a structured forum for cooperation between local and regional authorities and EU institutions, promoting the exchange of best practices and supporting a more coordinated European Defence Union.

During its first meeting, members discussed security conditions in their territories, highlighting projects and best practices in civil protection, resilience, cybersecurity, and countering disinformation.



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The group also held a debate with Klaus Welle, Special Advisor to Andrius Kubilius, European Commissioner for Defence and Space, who presented the Commission's latest initiatives. Members welcomed the ambition to accelerate Europe's defence integration and stressed the need to involve local and regional authorities in its implementation.

[New chapter opened in EU relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina's sub-national government](#)

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) held the inaugural meeting of its Working Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina on 22 September, marking a new phase in its engagement with local and regional authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The meeting gathered Bosnian leaders from entities, cantons, and municipalities to discuss the role and needs of sub-national authorities in the reforms necessary for EU accession.

The creation of the Working Group reflects Bosnia and Herzegovina's progress towards EU integration. Following candidate status in December 2022 and the opening of accession talks in March 2024, this initiative builds on 15 years of CoR cooperation with Bosnian sub-national authorities.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY (EDA)

[EU defence spending hits €343 bln in 2024, EDA data shows](#)

The European Defence Agency (EDA) has published its annual Defence Data report for 2024-2025, detailing defence spending from all 27 EU Member States. In 2024, defence expenditure by the 27 EU Member States reached an unprecedented €343 billion — a 19% rise on 2023 — bringing spending to 1.9% of GDP. The increase, driven largely by record levels of equipment procurement and rising investment in research and development, reflects Member States' determination to strengthen Europe's military capabilities in response to the evolving security environment.

[EDA launches fourth review of Member States' defence ambitions](#)

The European Defence Agency (EDA) and the EU Military Staff (EUMS) have begun consultations with Member States for the next Coordinated Annual Review on Defence ([CARD](#)), the EU's 'State of the Union' in defence.



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Scheduled for publication next year, the report will provide a comprehensive overview of Member States' goals, plans, and projects, outlining spending trends, identifying capability gaps, and highlighting collaborative defence initiatives with the greatest potential impact

Belgium was the first Member State to be consulted. EDA analysed its defence plans and priorities, discussing Belgium's national approach within the broader European context. These consultations provide valuable insights into how national strategies contribute to EU defence and promote cooperation that enhances interoperability and avoids duplication.

CARD plays a key role in ensuring coherence across the EU defence landscape and improving the efficiency of defence spending.

How EDA helps protect European waters

Last year, EU naval forces raised the alarm over drifting mines in the Black Sea, while unexploded ordnance continues to disrupt shipping and fishing in the Baltic and North Seas. These explosives, mostly remnants of the First and Second World War, still pose serious risks to military and commercial vessels, threatening lives, navigation freedom, and Europe's economies. The European Defence Agency (EDA) is leading efforts to counter these threats through technology and cooperation.

Within EDA, CapTech Maritime brings together experts from Member States, industry, and research to advance naval defence and develop common standards. Its flagship project, the Modular Lightweight Minesweeping (MLM), launched in 2011, has produced real operational capabilities. Unmanned systems equipped with acoustic and electromagnetic modules—developed by companies such as Patria (Finland) and CTM (Poland)—are already in service with several European navies, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway, and Germany.

The new phase, MLM Next Generation (MLM-NG), launched in June 2024 with six participating countries, has a €9.2 million budget and will hold full-scale trials in Norway in 2026. For the first time, systems will operate entirely unmanned, with remote command and control from land. This project exemplifies how EDA's collaborative research transforms into shared European naval strength, enhancing interoperability, protecting lives, and ensuring freedom of navigation across European waters.

COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



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[Austria's action against the inclusion of nuclear energy and fossil gas in the sustainable investment scheme dismissed](#)

The European Commission determined that certain activities in the nuclear energy and fossil gas sectors can, under specific conditions, make a substantial contribution to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Taxonomy Regulation established a framework to guide sustainable investments and tasked the Commission with setting technical screening criteria for identifying environmentally sustainable activities.

Based on this mandate, the Commission included nuclear and fossil gas energy in the list of activities that may qualify as sustainable, considering their potential role in ensuring energy security and reducing greenhouse gas emissions where low-carbon alternatives are not yet viable.

Austria challenged this decision before the General Court of the European Union, seeking its annulment. The Court dismissed the action, confirming that the Commission acted within its delegated powers. It ruled that the Commission had adequately assessed the risks related to nuclear energy, such as waste management and reactor safety, and was not required to go beyond existing regulatory standards.

The Court upheld that, under certain conditions, nuclear and fossil gas activities can contribute to climate objectives through a gradual reduction of emissions while maintaining energy supply stability.

[War in Ukraine: the General Court upholds the restrictive measures against Positive Group PAO, an entity operating in the Russian IT sector with a license issued by Russia's domestic intelligence services](#)

Following Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the EU broadened its restrictive measures to include entities in the Russian IT sector holding licenses from the Federal Security Service (FSB) or the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Under this new "IT criterion," Positive Group PAO, a holding company active in IT and cybersecurity and licensed by the FSB, was listed among the entities subject to asset freezes and other sanctions.

Positive Group PAO challenged its inclusion, arguing against the legality and proportionality of the IT criterion. The General Court rejected the challenge, holding that the criterion was clear, foreseeable, and consistent with legal certainty, as it defined a specific and objective group of entities.



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The Court found the measure proportionate to the EU's objectives of exerting pressure on Russia and countering information warfare. It ruled that the Council was not required to prove direct participation in Russian actions undermining Ukraine's sovereignty, as links with Russian security services were sufficient to justify inclusion.

The Court also determined that the measure did not constitute a disproportionate restriction on the freedom to conduct business, given its legitimate aim. It further concluded that the Council had not erred in its assessment, since Positive Group PAO exercised decisive influence over its subsidiary holding the FSB license, thereby meeting the conditions of the IT criterion.



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