

# Transparency International EU

The global coalition against corruption

## EU sanctions for corruption – the fight back starts here

Carl Dolan · Friday, December 7th, 2018

Sometimes – as with yesterday’s narrow Parliament vote [in favour of lobby transparency](#) – you ride your luck as an NGO. And sometimes the stars align so perfectly that you suspect there must be more to it than luck.

This Sunday, 9 December, is International Anti-Corruption Day, a celebration of the agreement by the UN in 2003 on a global Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) – the first time that a comprehensive set of anti-corruption norms had received such universal assent.

Next Monday, 10 December, is International Human Rights Day, and is also the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an inspirational document that for most of the intervening seven decades was the yardstick by which those who aspired to be liberal democracies measured themselves.

Seen from the disruption and uncertainty of 2018, both the Declaration and UNCAC now seem quaint, almost archaic, like fragments of a gnostic gospel. The sentiments they express and the institutions they underpin have received a hell of a battering in recent years. It is not just that human rights abuses are [on the rise](#), but that states no longer feel the need to even pay lip service to these values. Witness this year the brazen state-sponsored murders, or attempted murders, of political dissidents by the petro-kleptocracies Russia and Saudi Arabia, or the use of bribery by authoritarian regimes such as [Azerbaijan to subvert the work of the Council of Europe](#), whose role it is to monitor and censure human rights abuses.

It’s clear that these regimes have been emboldened by an increasingly fragmented world order and the seeming impotence of the international organisations like the UN and EU to tackle impunity for high-level corruption. Which is why developments at Monday’s Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels is so timely and on point. Conscious that the meeting falls on the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration, the Dutch government has decided to propose that the EU should overhaul its sanctions regime to allow for targeted sanctions of individuals and entities involved in serious corruption crimes and human rights abuses. Such sanctions programmes have already been enacted in a number of countries, notably the US and Canada, and typically hit the corrupt where it hurts most – confiscating their assets (money in bank accounts, high-end property) and denying them and their families easy international travel through visa bans. A [recent report](#) has shown how the EU can follow suit.

Given that Europe is a [favoured destination](#) for many kleptocrats and corrupt officials from around the world, getting the EU on board with this kind of sanctions regime could be a powerful deterrent

to would-be kleptocrats, and give the EU the tools to deal with nascent authoritarianism around the world.

The discussions on Monday are only the beginning of what promises to be a long and complex set of negotiations, but even putting it on the table is a good start. [We at TI – along with 90 other civil society organisations](#) – are fully behind this initiative and if you are too, please let EU foreign ministers know that they can play their role in defending human rights and defeating corruption by tagging them or your Ministry and tweeting:

“Ahead of International Anti-Corruption Day, we’re calling on @eu\_eas & EU Foreign Ministers to support EU measures that will prevent corrupt individuals and their money from entering the EU and help defend #humanrights @ti\_eu. Read more: <https://bit.ly/2BSSwJe> “

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