



Article Type: Research paper

## The role of human rights in the Middle East policy of the European Union

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### Article Info.

Received: 13/12/2023

Accepted: 01/06/2024

Available Online: 9/06/2024

### Abstract

The best reason for the creation of the European Union can be found in the writings of French Jean Monnet, who is called the father of the European Union. He believed that sharing natural resources among European countries and creating a new power (European Commission) could lay the first foundations of the European Federation to maintain peace in this continent. The cornerstone of European unity was the European Community, the process of its formation goes back to the announcement of Robert Schuman, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the joint plan for coal and steel, which Jean Monnet was the creator and designer of, and Schuman, as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, accepted the responsibility for its design. Five years after World War II in 1950, France offered full participation in all French and German coal and steel production. Three decades after the Treaty of Rome, the European Union

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### How to Site:

Sarkkeh, Ibrahim (1403). The position of human rights in the Middle East policy of the European Union. *Fundamental and Applied Studies of the Islamic World*, 6(1), 17-19.



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took an important step in including human rights in its foreign policy, and this matter entered into the implementation stage with the signing of the Treaty of European Union in November 1993. This treaty considers the development and consolidation of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as one of the objectives of the common foreign and security policy; Therefore, it seems that human rights play an important role in both the foreign and domestic policies of the European Union. Also, since the early 1990s, the European Union has included human rights clauses in its cooperation and bilateral trade agreements with third countries and partnership agreements. Based on the model approved by the Council of Ministers in May 1995, the observance of human rights and democratic principles is the focus of the internal and external policies of the parties to the contract and the essential part of any agreement with third countries. In addition, according to the Treaty of Amsterdam, which entered into force on May 1, 1997, EU member states have established a mechanism to sanction countries that commit serious and persistent violations of human rights. The Treaty of Nice, which was concluded in December 2000, further strengthened this mechanism.

The issue of human rights has always been one of the most important influencing variables in the foreign policy of the European Union in different regions and towards different actors. What effect has the variable of human rights had on the relations between the European Union and the Middle East? forms the subject of this research; Therefore, the main question of this research is what is the position of human rights in the foreign policy of the European Union towards the countries of the Middle East? The findings of this article show that, contrary to what is stated, human rights are used as a completely political tool in order to expand the soft power of the European Union. In other words, the issue of human rights for the European Union is more than a normative issue, it is a tool to achieve political goals and increase soft power. This article tries to investigate this issue with an analytical approach.

The European Union places great emphasis on human rights in its foreign relations, including the Middle East policy. The European Union is committed to promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law around the world. This commitment is reflected in various policies, including promoting the rights of women, children, minorities, and refugees, opposing the death penalty, torture, human trafficking, and discrimination, and defending civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

The European Union has adopted a strategic framework for human rights and democracy, which outlines the principles, goals and priorities for improv-

ing the effectiveness and consistency of its human rights policies. In addition, the European Union is preparing to sign the European Convention on Human Rights, which emphasizes its commitment to human rights. However, it is important to note that in practice, EU policies and actions have been criticized for falling short in some areas such as immigration and the government's response to racism and violence. The position of human rights in the European Union's Middle East policy is discussed with a liberal approach and is used as a tool to expand soft power in the framework of public diplomacy of this Union.

Human rights can be seen as a tool of EU soft power, which is a diplomatic strategy that aims to achieve desirable results by attracting foreign governments to come closer to EU values. The Union has a comprehensive toolkit that allows it to implement and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. Among these things, the following can be mentioned:

**Cultural diplomacy:** Exchange of ideas through music, film or art can be used to promote human rights and EU values.

**Economic cooperation:** cooperation in the economic field is a very good tool to use the soft power of the European Union; Because it can help as a precondition for expanding economic cooperation and creating common interests and values between partner countries.

**Eastern Partnership Program:** This program aims to transition to democratic governance in countries such as Moldova, Georgia, and Armenia, and has had successful results in promoting human rights and democratic values in the region.

However, the use of human rights tools and instruments can raise criticisms such as accusations of neo-colonialism or encroachment on national sovereignty. Despite these challenges, the European Union continues to use human rights as a tool for soft power and strives to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in different regions of the world.

**Key words:** policy, human rights, Middle East, European Union.