



PRESS RELEASE

Six Europeans arbitrarily sanctioned by European Union for crime of opinion

On 26 February 2026 the Geneva International Peace Research Institute (GIPRI) wrote to the Council of European Union (CEU) to protest its decisions to sanction six Europeans whom it accuses of being “pro-Kremlin and anti-Ukrainian propagandists ».

These persons include Swiss retired army colonel and geopolitical analyst Jacques Baud; Swiss anti-colonial advocate Nathalie Yamb; French Russian businessman and geopolitical analyst Xavier Moreau; and German journalists Huseyin Dogru, Alina Lipp and Thomas Röper.

The CEU accuses them of being “responsible for implementing, supporting, or benefitting from actions or policies by the Government of the Russian Federation, which undermine or threaten democracy, the rule of law, stability or security in the Union”¹ on the ground of their alleged or imputed “pro-Russian” views, deemed to be “destabilizing”.

They are being penalized for publishing critical assessments of the war in Ukraine, its causes and consequences; analysis of Western and Russian politics in that conflict; the genocide in Gaza, as well as other important domestic or international politics, including war and peace. The CEU deems their views “pro-Russian” because they may at times coincide with positions or policies of the Russian Federation. That these persons could have formed their opinions in good faith, based on their independent research and judgment, does not occur to the EU. This is a grotesque conflation and violation of the right to freedom of opinion and expression

The sanctions consist in “asset freezes and travel bans”². Practically, this means that they cannot access any longer to their bank accounts and are thus deprived of their resources to subsist. They cannot receive salaries, buy food, pay their rent, bills or medical care. These sanctions amount to an economic death sentence which undermine their right to exist. Anyone assisting them with money may face up to 5 years in prison.

¹Council decision 2024/2643 of 8 October 2024 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia’s destabilising activities, Article 1(a) : https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legalcontent/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L_202402643

²“Travel bans prevent listed individuals from entering or transiting through EU territory by land, air or sea. Asset freezes mean that all accounts belonging to the listed persons and entities in EU banks are frozen. It is also prohibited to make any funds or assets directly or indirectly available to them.”
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-russia-explained/>

They are punished for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of opinion, expression, research, information and movement. These rights form the bedrock of European and international human rights law and are protected by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). They are at the heart of EU's "aims and core values".³

These sanctions are political, arbitrary and extra-judicial. They are decreed outside any legal procedure and violate the principles of due process: the rights to be presumed innocent, to defend oneself against accusations, and to a fair hearing before an independent court. Being deprived of their own resources, they are unable to hire lawyers to defend themselves. These sanctions also violate the right to non-discrimination for one's opinions and are defamatory.

And yet, in an Orwellian twist of thought, the CEU states that these "sanctions are not punitive and instead seek to bring about a change in the policy or conduct of those targeted, with a view to promoting the objectives of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy."⁴ These persons are thus punished to force them to change their views and embrace the foreign policy objectives of the EU, which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 but is now promoting war against Russia, supporting the genocide in Gaza and war against Iran.

These sanctions are unjust, liberticides and disproportionate. Even imprisoned criminals are better treated.

They are bad omen for citizens of Europe: they prefigure the fate that may befall on us should we hold views that differ with those of the EU. The peaceful expression of political views or analyses cannot be a crime, unless it incites to violence or hatred – which is not the case in these instances. The GIPRI fails to see how the views of these persons undermine peace, democracy, the rule of law and human rights in Europe.

With these sanctions, the EU is reintroducing in Europe a crime of opinion that was thought to be a thing of the past.

GIPRI urges the CEU to rescind these decisions and promptly restore the rights of these persons under European and international human rights law. It also urges the European Parliament to remind the CEU of its obligations to protect the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, information, and movement of these persons - as well as their fundamental right to subsistence - which are critical to the rule of a just law, to a healthy democratic process, and are conducive to dignity, justice and peace.

³ These core values are human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, rule of law, human rights. See "Aims and values of the European Union" : https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/aims-and-values_en

⁴ These objectives are: "safeguarding EU's values, fundamental interests and security; supporting democracy, the rule of law, human rights and international law; preserving peace, preventing conflicts and strengthening international security (...)" . The CEU does not hesitate to state that its sanctions "are fully compliant with obligations under international law" (...) whilst respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms." <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions-against-russia-explained/>