

## EU support for UN investigations at the Human Rights Council: the Israel/Palestine exception

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### UNHRC investigations

Dispatching [UN commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions and other investigation bodies](#) into conflict zones around the world and following up on their findings are among the most important roles of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The investigations, established by resolutions adopted by the UNHRC, are vital for documenting facts about contested events, promoting compliance with international human rights and humanitarian norms and ensuring accountability for their violations.

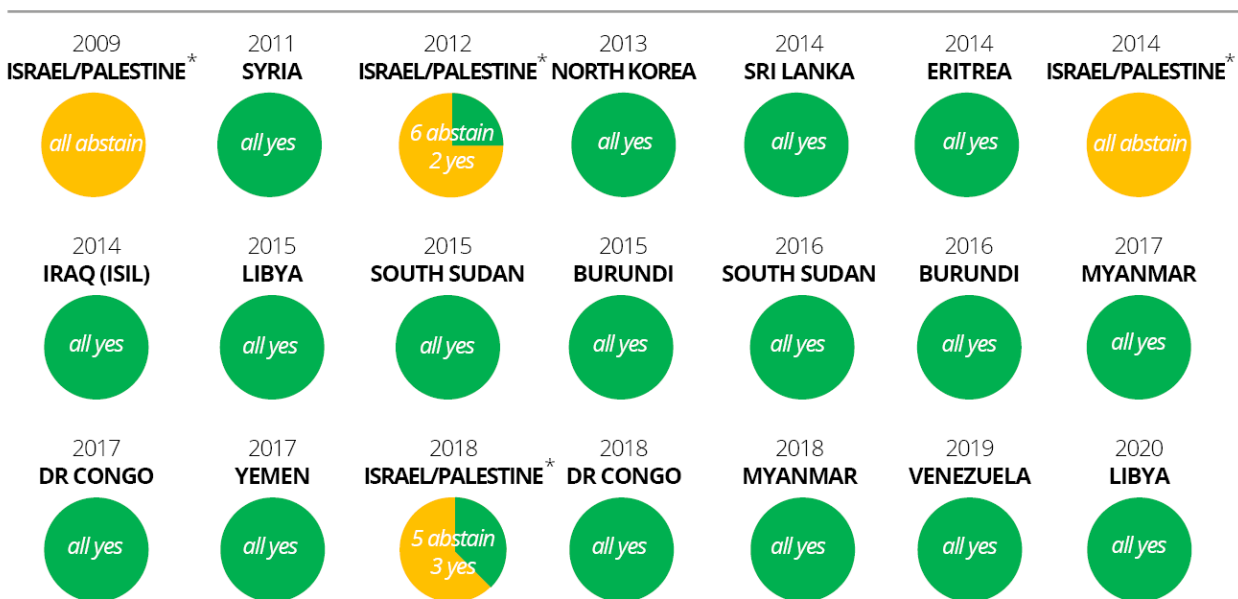
### Research and findings

EuMEP has examined the EU member states' (including the UK) voting record on all investigations into conflict and crisis situations worldwide launched by the UN Human Rights Council from 2009 to 2021.

- **Since 2009, the UNHRC has established 21 investigations into 13 crisis situations.** These included four inquiries on Israel/Palestine: 2009 (Gaza-Israel hostilities), 2012 (Israeli settlements), 2014 (Gaza-Israel hostilities), 2018 (Gaza protests).
- **EU states unanimously voted for all resolutions establishing investigations except for those on Israel/Palestine, where they mostly abstained.**

Chart: EU member state positions on UNHRC resolutions mandating UN inquiries into conflicts, 2009-2021

### UNHRC resolutions establishing UN inquiries 2009-2021 How EU states voted



\* 2009: Gaza, 2012: Settlements, 2014: Gaza, 2018: Gaza protests

The following table lists all the UNHRC-mandated inquiries since 2009, displayed in the above chart.

*Table: UNHRC resolutions mandating UN inquiries into conflicts, 2009-2021, and EU position.*

Conflict	Investigation	Resolution	Adopted	EU position
Israel/Palestine	UN FFM on the Gaza conflict	<a href="#">S-9/1</a>	12-01-2009	7 Abstain*
Syria	Independent International Col on the Syrian Arab Republic	<a href="#">S-17/1</a>	22-08-2011	All Yes
Israel/Palestine	IFFM on Israeli Settlements in OPT	<a href="#">19/17</a>	22-03-2012	6 Abstain* 2 Yes*
North Korea	Commission of Inquiry on HR in the DPRK	<a href="#">22/13</a>	21-03-2013	All Yes
Sri Lanka	OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka	<a href="#">25/1</a>	27-03-2014	All Yes
Eritrea	Independent International Col on Eritrea	<a href="#">26/24</a>	27-06-2014	All Yes
Israel/Palestine	UN Independent International Col on the 2014 Gaza Conflict	<a href="#">S-21/1</a>	23-07-2014	9 Abstain*
Iraq (ISIL)	OHCHR Investigation Mission to Iraq (ISIL)	<a href="#">S-22/1</a>	01-09-2014	All Yes
Libya	OHCHR Investigation on Libya	<a href="#">28/30</a>	27-03-2015	All Yes
South Sudan	OHCHR Monitoring Mission on South Sudan	<a href="#">29/13</a>	02-07-2015	All Yes
Burundi	UN Independent Investigation on Burundi	<a href="#">S-24/1</a>	17-12-2015	All Yes
South Sudan	Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan	<a href="#">31/20</a>	23-03-2016	All Yes
Burundi	Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Burundi	<a href="#">33/24</a>	30-09-2016	All Yes
Myanmar	Independent International Fact-Finding on Myanmar	<a href="#">34/22</a>	24-03-2017	All Yes
DR Congo (Kasai)	International Team of Experts on the situation in Kasai - I	<a href="#">35/33</a>	23-06-2017	All Yes
Yemen	Group of Eminent Experts on the situation of HR in Yemen	<a href="#">36/31</a>	29-09-2017	All Yes
Israel/Palestine	UN Commission of Inquiry on the 2018 protests in the OPT	<a href="#">S-28/1</a>	18-05-2018	5 Abstain* 3 Yes*
DR Congo (Kasai)	International Team of Experts on the situation. in Kasai - II	<a href="#">38/20</a>	06-07-2018	All Yes
Myanmar	Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar	<a href="#">39/2</a>	27-09-2018	All Yes
Venezuela	Independent International Fact-Finding Mission	<a href="#">42/25</a>	27-09-2019	All Yes
Libya	Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya	<a href="#">43/39</a>	20-06-2020	All Yes

## Observations

The European Union, in principle, strongly supports accountability for violations of international law. In relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the EU has also repeatedly stated its common [position](#) that “compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by state and non-state actors, including accountability, is a cornerstone for peace and security in the region”.

In practice, however, the EU’s voting record on Israel/Palestine investigations fails to live up to the above principles.

- **This is not just inconsistent but also contributes to the recurrent violence by giving both Israel and Palestinian armed groups the impression that they can avoid international accountability.**
- **EU countries should apply the same standards of international law and human rights to Israel/Palestine as anywhere else in the world and stop abstaining on the promotion of accountability at the UN.**

\* In the vote on the 2009 investigation (Gaza-Israel hostilities) all 7 EU states abstained (France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, UK). In 2012 (Israeli settlements), 6 abstained (Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain) and 2 voted in favour (Austria, Belgium). In 2014 (Gaza-Israel hostilities), all abstained (Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Romania, UK). In 2018 (Gaza protests), 5 EU states abstained (Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, UK) and 3 voted in favour (Belgium, Slovenia, Spain). Membership of the UNHRC rotates: at any moment, around 7-9 EU states are voting members.