



EU foreign policy: double standards and the price of strategic dependence on the US

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Abstract: Given ongoing EU failure to condemn outright not only Israel's genocide in Gaza and invasion of Lebanon but US aggression against Iran, this blog calls for the self-styled global champion of human rights to take an independent stand against the whims of Washington's foreign policy.

The [European Citizens' Initiative](#) demanding full suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement crossed the legally binding threshold of one million signatures on 13 April 2026. The fastest ever such initiative, clearing national thresholds in ten member states, three more than required, obliges the Commission to respond in public. Yet [organisers are pushing](#) toward 1.5m signatures, doubting that even this will move Brussels. Four episodes from the past year explain that doubt: the stalled Association Agreement, the lopsided sanctions practice, Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon and illegal war on Iran and the Greenland crisis – indicating a Union shaped less by the rules it claims to defend than by dependence on an ally now dismantling them.

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A finding, not an allegation, and a deal that survives it

The EU's vocabulary – 'concerns', 'indications', 'serious violations' – launders an established reality into something that still sounds negotiable, but it's not. The UN Commission of Inquiry has concluded Israel committed [four of the five](#) genocidal acts defined by the [Convention](#) on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the International Association of Genocide Scholars voted by an 86 percent majority that Israel's conduct in Gaza meets the [legal definition of genocide](#), the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is now hearing [South Africa's genocide](#) case on the merits and UN experts call suspending the EU-Israel trade agreement a '[minimum requirement](#)' under international law – marking the converging judgement of a UN inquiry, the world's foremost genocide scholars, and the ICJ. Calling that 'differing assessments' is complicity dressed up as caution. Even the [EU's own diplomatic service](#) concluded, by mid-2025, that there were 'indications' of breaches of the clause conditioning the relationship on respect for human rights – yet Germany, Hungary, Italy and the Czech Republic are still blocking even Von der Leyen's watered-down suspension proposal, nine months on, despite [Amnesty International's appeals](#) and warnings from more than [185 civil society organisations](#) that the EU's inaction is itself now a violation of its own commitments. Even barring Israel from this year's [Eurovision](#) collapsed.

Sanctions for some, silence for others

Confronted with [Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#), the Union froze assets, banned officials, cut banks off from SWIFT and over three years adopted eighteen rounds of sanctions. Confronted with a genocide described in essentially identical terms by its own diplomats, a UN inquiry, the world's leading genocide scholars and the ICJ and funded in part through EU-guaranteed trade access, the EU has adopted not a single sanctions package against Israel: no asset freezes, no arms embargo, nothing beyond statements of 'concern'.

No legal, factual or moral distinction explains that gap – both cases involve invasion and annexation of another people's territory, mass civilian death and displacement, condemnation by international courts and UN bodies. The only variable is whose ally is responsible. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has said the EU's refusal to sanction Israel '[weakens](#)' its own authority to defend Ukraine, handing Moscow proof that 'international law' is, for Europeans, a flag raised against enemies and lowered for friends.

Lebanon and Iran: war expanding, silence holding

Since its March 2026 ground invasion of Lebanon, [Israel has illegally occupied](#) 570-600 square km of Lebanese territory and continues issuing mass displacement orders. Defence Minister Israel Katz has declared Israel's intent to [permanently occupy Lebanese land](#) up to the Litani River, displacing over 1.2m Lebanese civilians, a fifth of the population, under a ceasefire Israel keeps violating. This is openly declared annexation, not a security operation – and the Union that can muster 18 sanctions packages against Russian conquest has, against this one, mustered a press release.

The same applies, more starkly, to the war Israel and the United States launched against Iran on 28 February 2026: there is overwhelming legal agreement that it was [unlawful aggression](#), since the UN Charter permits force only with Security Council authorisation or self-defence and [neither condition was met](#). Brussels called only for 'full respect of international law', naming no one. At the same time, Germany's chancellor Friedrich Merz suggested international law should not stand in the way of what he called '[majority security threat](#)'. This position should alarm anyone who still believes the Union is bound by the order it helped build.

Greenland: when 'strategic partner' turns predator

The Greenland crisis showed how little this approach buys Europe in return. Donald Trump spent months refusing to rule out seizing Greenland by force, then threatened Denmark and seven other states with [tariffs of up to 25 percent](#) unless Copenhagen sold the territory outright. European leaders called it a '[dangerous downward spiral](#)'; Brussels drew up a [retaliatory package worth €93 bn](#); and Trump eventually backed down at Davos, though, this did not amount to renunciation of the underlying ambition. A Union this dependent on Washington for security, energy and trade can be coerced by it whenever interests diverge – and, having just felt that coercion first-hand, still lets the relationship dictate its silence over Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

Complicit, and unable to go on like this

A Union built on the promise of 'never again' is sustaining, through a trade agreement it refuses to suspend, the economy of a state committing genocide: that is complicity in the plain legal and moral sense, materially supporting an internationally recognised crime while holding the means to stop it. Add an annexation in Lebanon conducted in full view of European cameras and an illegal war on Iran that Brussels could not even name correctly and this is no longer an occasional inconsistency. It is a Union that has, in practice, chosen a side, and not the side of the people whose rights it claims, on every other continent, to defend. These are not competing narratives requiring further assessment. They are facts established by the EU's own diplomats, UN bodies, the world's leading genocide scholars, the ICJ and international law itself. An organisation that meets Russia's war crimes with the language of accountability, while meeting all of the above with 'concerns' addressed to no one, is choosing, repeatedly, whose victims count according to whose ally is responsible – an abdication that cannot continue without destroying its claim to be a normative power.

The way out is independence: a foreign policy that does not need Washington's permission to call genocide by its name, that sanctions an ally as readily as an adversary and that does not mistake 'strategic partnership' for subordination. Greenland should have taught Brussels that this US administration treats even close allies as assets to be coerced when convenient, an imperial logic drawing no real distinction between Copenhagen and Kyiv, Beirut and Gaza, except where it suits Washington to draw one. A Union that keeps outsourcing its conscience to that logic will keep being treated like Lebanon, Iran and Palestine: territory to be managed, not a partner to be respected. Europe does not need to mirror that model to be strong. It needs to refuse it, articulate

its own vision of what international law and human rights require, and prove, through action rather than statements, that it can hold to that vision even at the price of friction with Washington.

Over a million of its own citizens have already said as much. Whether Brussels is capable of listening, while the death toll in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran keeps climbing and the Union's credibility burns with it, is the question on which its claim to be the 'land of human rights' now stands or falls.