

**Question for written answer E-004772/2015
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**
Rule 130
Barbara Matera (PPE)

Subject: VP/HR - Discrimination against women's rights in Lebanon

Lebanon is a country in which religious diversity is a feature. In response to this reality, the government in Beirut has decided to entrust civil law jurisdiction to 18 different courts: one for each faith group.

According to a study by Human Rights Watch, these courts share an attitude of favouritism towards men. In most cases, custody of children is awarded to the fathers, who can afford court costs which are often prohibitive to women.

The report analyses 447 recent orders issued by religious courts in custody and child maintenance cases, and their decrees in 243 divorces. The results demonstrate systematic discrimination against women, leading to rulings which are often arbitrary.

1. Is the High Representative aware of this situation of discrimination against women in Lebanon?
2. How far is the High Representative minded to intervene, via diplomatic channels, to raise the Lebanese Government's awareness of the need to introduce a civil code, which might offer an alternative to those who do not intend to submit to the laws of the religious courts?