

**Question for written answer E-004862/2015
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**

Rule 130

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Subject: VP/HR - Human rights defenders in Syria

In view of the human tragedy in Syria, we would like to highlight the particularly worrisome situation of its human rights defenders.

Three human rights defenders in Syria – Mazen Darwish, Hani Al-Zitani and Hussein Gharir – remain in prison after being detained on 12 February 2012 by Syrian Air Force Intelligence during a raid on the Damascus offices of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression. In February 2013 the three human rights defenders were charged under the Anti-Terrorism Law for ‘publicising terrorist acts’. Since then, their trial has been repeatedly postponed.

Other human rights defenders at risk in Syria include the winner of the 2011 Sakharov Prize, Razan Zaitouneh, who was abducted in Duma in December 2013 along with three other human rights defenders, Samira al-Khalil, Wael Hamada, and Nazem Hammadi, whose whereabouts remain unknown.

What action has the VP/HR taken, or is she planning to take, to ensure the safety of human rights defenders in Syria, including raising these cases with other international actors, such as the UN, which have direct channels of communication with the regime in Damascus?