

**Question for written answer E-012146/2015
to the Commission
Rule 130
Fernando Maura Barandiarán (ALDE)**

Subject: Prevalence of coeliac disease among Sahrawi refugees

Several studies show that the prevalence of coeliac disease caused by gluten intolerance among the population of Western Sahara is 6%, one of the highest in the world. This factor is of particular concern for Sahrawis who have been forced by Morocco's illegal invasion to live in the refugee camps in Tindouf, in southern Algeria. They are dependent on humanitarian aid, and most of the food provided contains gluten. As a result, they are unable to follow the diet that currently offers the only effective treatment for people with this disease, which affects various organs such as the intestines, liver, thyroid gland, skin and reproductive system. Coeliacs who do not follow this diet face a greater risk of dying from the associated conditions, chiefly cancer – intestinal lymphoma, tongue and oesophageal cancer, etc. – as well as cardiovascular diseases and complications such as diabetes and osteoporosis. For children, failure to follow a gluten-free diet causes anaemia, diarrhoea, malnutrition and growth deficiency, problems that are already causing serious harm to the health of Sahrawi children in refugee camps even when they do not suffer from coeliac disease.

Given the exceptionally high prevalence of coeliac disease among the Sahrawi population and the extremely significant role that European Union humanitarian aid plays in the diet of refugees in Tindouf:

Is the Commission aware of this situation with regard to food and diet for the population living in the refugee camps in Tindouf?

Will the Commission introduce mechanisms to ensure that supplies sent as an expression of European solidarity contain as many gluten-free foods as possible?