

Question for written answer E-000203/2016
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
Sofia Sakorafa (GUE/NGL)

Subject: VP/HR - Mass executions in Saudi Arabia

On 02 January 2016, the Saudi authorities carried out the mass execution of 47 people, including the prominent Shia cleric, Nimr Baqr Al-Nimr.

Executions, usually by public beheading, are being systematically ordered by the Riyadh Government (157 in 2015) and have reached unprecedented levels over the past two decades.

Capital punishment has been repeatedly condemned by the EU and UN.

The UN Secretary General has expressed grave concerns regarding the nature of the charges and the fairness of the proceedings.

In this way, freedom of expression and basic civil and political rights are being consistently infringed. There is also a risk of further exacerbating religious tensions, with dangerous implications for the entire region, thereby compromising any solution to the crisis in Syria.

In its relations with the wider world, the Union has a duty to contribute to the protection of human rights, the strict observance of international law and respect for the principles of the UN Charter (Article 3(5) TEU).

In view of this:

1. Can the Vice-President/High Representative say what measures she has taken or plans to take to put pressure on Saudi Arabia to end the executions?
2. What view does she take of the decision by Riyadh to proceed with the execution of Nimr Baqr Al-Nimr at this point in time? What impact does she believe this will have on negotiations to resolve the crisis in Syria?