

Question for written answer E-003253/2016/rev.1
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
Beatrix von Storch (EFDD)

Subject: VP/HR - Failure to respect freedom of religion in Turkey: Erdogan's expropriation of an Orthodox monastery

Contemporary Turkey regards itself as a secular State, but it denies Christians basic rights when it comes to the actual exercise of freedom of belief and religion. Patriarch Bartholomew I represents no fewer than 300 000 Orthodox Christians in Turkey. As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a member of the Council of Europe and a party to the European Convention on Human Rights, Turkey has committed itself to maintaining freedom of religion. Now Turkey has expropriated an Orthodox monastery, which is apparently to be converted into a fire station.

Does the Vice-President of the Commission/ High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy agree that the situation of non-Muslim Christian communities in Turkey is precarious?

Despite its explosive nature, the subject of religious freedom was not mentioned in the summary of the High-Level Political Dialogue between the EU and Turkey which took place in Ankara on 25 January 2016. How much political importance does the Vice-President/ High Representative ascribe to guaranteeing freedom of religion for Christians in Turkey? Will the Vice-President/ High Representative adopt a critical position on the closure of the Orthodox monastery?

Will the Vice-President/ High Representative make representations to Turkey to secure the reopening of the Orthodox Seminary on Chalki, which has been closed since 1971?