

**Question for written answer E-007473/2017
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**
Rule 130
Francisco Assis (S&D)

Subject: VP/HR - Law restricting civil society in Guatemala

A new draft law on non-governmental organisations has recently been tabled in the Guatemalan Congress. This initiative (5257) would impose requirements and checks that would in practice mean that civil society organisations were no longer able to operate, which could have serious consequences for the exercise of democracy and freedom of association, among other fundamental principles. The situation could be further aggravated if other legislative initiatives currently under review are adopted, such as the counterterrorism law and the law on protection for life and the family, since they also seek to restrict organised expressions of opinion on the part of civil society. Civil society and its organisations have been targeted by increasingly subtle governmental and legislative measures in various countries across the world, whose aim is to hamper or restrict their capacity to act. Europe is not immune to this worrying global trend, as can be seen in Member States such as Hungary and Poland.

What steps will the EU take to help ensure that the Guatemalan authorities abandon any attempt to use legislative proposals of this kind to undermine NGOs' freedom and capacity to act?