

**Question for written answer E-008704/2013
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**
Rule 117
Joanna Senyszyn (S&D)

Subject: VP/HR - EU-GCC Ministerial meeting

The High Representative recently participated in the EU-GCC Ministerial meeting that took place on June 30 2013 in Bahrain. Parliament has made clear its concerns about the continuing harassment and persecution of human rights defenders and systematic violations of freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Just over one year ago the EU adopted a new EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, pledging that human rights, democracy, and the rule of law will be promoted 'in all areas of the EU's external actions without exception' and that the EU will 'place human rights at the centre of its relations with all third countries, including strategic partners'.

I note that after this ministerial meeting the High Representative stated: 'we do have honest and open discussions on issues, for example on human rights'. Could the High Representative specify which specific human rights concerns were raised with GCC counterparts during the ministerial meeting?