

**Question for written answer E-012615/2013
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 117
Zbigniew Ziobro (EFD)**

Subject: VP/HR - seizure of Greenpeace vessel on the Barents Sea

On 19 September Russian coastal guards on the Barents Sea seized the 'Arctic Sunrise', a vessel belonging to Greenpeace. The vessel and its crew were towed to a port in Murmansk and the crew was arrested. Its members were initially charged with terrorism, although the charges were later commuted to hooliganism. Greenpeace representatives are opposed to these charges. According to Robert Cyglicki, Programme Director at Greenpeace Poland, 'Greenpeace has a 42-year history of entirely peaceful activism and these charges are nothing less than attempted libel against the activists. It should not be forgotten that our boat was seized by people armed with knives and firearms. Our activists, the ship's crew and the journalists are no more hooligans than they are pirates. The commuted charges are still disproportionately harsh and carry a prison sentence of up to seven years, which is an insult to the idea of a peaceful protest. These courageous people decided to sail to the Arctic armed with nothing more than a desire to show the world the truth about the ruthless oil business. They should now be with their families, not under arrest in Murmansk.' The 'Arctic Sunrise' sails under a Dutch flag. A total of 27 environmentalists are being held, including EU citizens such as the Polish citizen Tomasz Dziemianczuk who is employed by the University of Gdansk.

Are the Commission and the European External Action Service monitoring the situation of the detained Greenpeace activists?

What steps have been taken by the European External Action Service to help the detainees?

What steps have been taken by the European External Action Service to bring about the release of the detainees?

Has the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy raised this issue during meetings with representatives of the Russian Federation, and if not are there plans to do so?