

**Question for written answer E-013232/2013
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)**

Rule 117

Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou (PPE)

Subject: VP/HR - The deterioration of women's rights in the Arab world

Two years after the Arab Spring, the situation as regards women's rights in the Arab world is a matter of great concern, in particular regarding incidents of violence and sexual harassment.

'Women's rights in the Arab World, the worst and best Arab States for Women', a report published on 12 November 2013 by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, examines violence against women, the treatment of women within the family and women's role in politics in 22 Arab states.

The report highlights that Egypt is the worst country for women in the Arab world: up to 99 % of women and girls there are subjected to sexual harassment. Iraq ranked second-worst after Egypt, followed by Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen. In addition, the report alleges that Iraq is more dangerous nowadays than it was under Saddam Hussein's regime, and there are no women governors in Iraq's 18 governorates.

Although 19 out of the 22 countries concerned have signed the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the report's findings are nevertheless frustrating.

Given that the European Union is keen for the changes in the Arab world to be accompanied by respect for human rights and the social inclusion of women:

1. What is the High Representative's response to this report?
2. Has the European Union obtained more recent data on this problem, and are there any studies focusing on specific countries or time periods?
3. How is the European Union preparing to act with a view to tackling violence, sexual harassment and other discrimination against women in the Arab world effectively? Do the Commission and the High Representative consider current European policy to be effective? Do they envisage a new strategy?