

Question for written answer E-003111/2014
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 117
Michał Tomasz Kamiński (ECR)

Subject: VP/HR - Dangers facing the Orthodox Christian community in Syria

Since the civil war broke out in Syria in 2011, the country's native Orthodox Christian community has been facing attacks from Islamic rebels. Their community life and the nation's Christian heritage are also under threat. Attacks are occurring against Orthodox villages, schools and monasteries, and members of the community are also being kidnapped. The fate of some of those kidnapped remains uncertain. This is the case with two bishops kidnapped on 22 April 2013 – Metropolitan Paul Yazigi of Aleppo of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, and Metropolitan John Ibrahim of Aleppo of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch. A deacon who was accompanying them was also shot dead by the attackers.

In late November 2013, members of the radical Islamist faction 'Jabhat al-Nusra' carried out yet another attack on the Orthodox village of Maaloula and broke into the convent of Saint Thecla, where Orthodox nuns were sheltering orphans and members of the Muslim minority. 13 nuns were kidnapped.

Is the High Representative aware of the dangers that the Syrian Orthodox community is facing due to the internal conflicts raging between Muslims over the shape of Syria's future? What can the EU do to prevent violence against Christians from escalating? How can the EU support efforts to secure the release of kidnapped members of the Orthodox community in Syria?