

**Question for written answer E-003947/2014  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

**Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE) and Marietje Schaake (ALDE)**

Subject: Rape as a weapon of war in Syria

While the media frequently highlight the inhumane and illegal use of chemical weapons and torture in the Syrian civil war, they often fail to mention the use of rape as a weapon of war against women and girls, which is no less intolerable and no less widespread<sup>1</sup>. A pervasive pattern of rapes has been documented in Syria in the past few months<sup>2</sup>. Frequently, women and girls who are raped face familial and social rejection, severe injuries, and unwanted pregnancies. However, impregnated young girls and women are denied access to life-saving abortions, because of the harsh anti-abortion restrictions placed by the US on its humanitarian aid to Syria. This results in safe abortion services being refused, and victims sometimes resort to unsafe abortion and even suicide.

1. Is the Commission aware of the fact that Syrian rape victims are being denied proper humanitarian aid because of strict US abortion restrictions?
2. Does the Commission accept the anti-abortion restrictions placed by the US on the provision of humanitarian aid to Syria? Can it state to what extent this restriction impedes the implementation of EU humanitarian aid for rape victims?
3. In its answer<sup>3</sup> to written question E-005386/2012, the Commission stated that it 'provides principled and needs-based humanitarian aid' and 'is not subject to any restrictions unilaterally imposed by other donors'. Could the Commission explain how this works in practice, given the fact that the US is the largest provider of humanitarian aid?
4. In its answer<sup>3</sup> to written question E-005386/2012, the Commission stated that EU assistance includes 'confidential clinical care for survivors of rape and other forms of gender-based violence, as part of the Minimum Initial Service Package of Reproductive Health in Crises' and that 'emergency contraception is also used for rape survivors as part of the Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP)'. Does the Commission acknowledge that life-saving abortions are not part of the PEP?
5. Could the Commission specify to what extent new tools have been developed to improve the gender sensitivity aspect of humanitarian actions, and exactly what kinds of humanitarian aid are concerned?

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times, 18 March 2014, accessed online at: [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/21/opinion/rape-as-a-weapon-in-syria.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/21/opinion/rape-as-a-weapon-in-syria.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&_r=0).

<sup>2</sup> Harvard Health Policy Review, December 2013, accessed online at: <http://hhpronline.org/un-inaction-and-rape-as-a-weapon-of-war-in-syria/>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2012-005386&language=EN>.