

Question for written answer E-005241/2014
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 117
Charles Tannock (ECR)

Subject: VP/HR - Persecution of Christians in Iran

The persecution of Christians in Iran is well-documented, and shows no sign of abating under President Rouhani's regime. Five detainees have recently been sentenced to between three and a half and eight years' imprisonment, on charges ranging from acting against national security through membership of a Christian organisation, to spreading propaganda against the Islamic Republic by helping disperse Christianity in the country. In reality, it appears that their sole crime is the peaceful exercise of Christian belief.

The accused are: Mr Farshid Fathi Malayer, Mr Alireza Sayyedian, Mr Saeed Abedinigalangashi, Mrs Maryam Naghash Zargaran and Mr Behnam Irani. A sixth detainee, Mr Amin Khaki, was detained on 5 March 2014, but has currently not been charged.

It appears that several of the detainees have suffered health problems since their arrest, with at least one being held in solitary confinement and another alleging physical mistreatment and the refusal of medical attention.

1. Is the VP/HR aware of the cases of these six detainees?
2. Does she agree that the continued detention of these individuals for their Christian belief, and their alleged mistreatment, is a violation of international human rights law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which Iran is a State Party?
3. Will she use her leverage with the Iranian authorities to call personally for their release, and to draw attention to the many other Christians in Iran who are currently imprisoned?