

**Question for written answer E-003750/2016/rev.1
to the Council**

Rule 130

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Subject: Providing visas to Syrian clergy without intention to request asylum

A witness to mass murder and genocide by the IS (2016/2529(RSP)) and other terrorist groups on ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq and Syria, among which his own Aramean Christian minority, a Syrian Orthodox priest is visiting several EU Member States. While the Netherlands and other EU States are increasingly confronted with foreign extremist preachers that are potentially presenting a threat to public order and safety and to whom regular visas were issued despite numerous incidents, priest - a builder of bridges between different religious groups and someone who has helped free hundreds of Aramean and other victims of ISIS - was initially not granted a visa for EU Member States. He was only granted a visa for Italy after the intervention of the Holy Chair.

Regarding the above and similar cases, and in order to facilitate meetings with policy makers, religious communities and associations in the EU, is the Council prepared to guarantee generously in the future that visas will be issued (in accordance with Rule 2 of Regulation (EU) No 539/2001 and for a maximum stay of three months as stated therein) to Christian and other clergy of persecuted minorities (of one or more nationalities of third countries listed in Attachment I of said Regulation) by all Member States, and thereby put an end to the current practice of rejecting visa applications by this category of clergy coming from Syria and other war-torn states?