

**Question for written answer E-003319/2020
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Brando Benifei (S&D)

Subject: Religious freedom, forced conversions of underage girls in Pakistan, and compliance with GSP+ criteria

Radical Islamists and clerics in Pakistan called for the death penalty and beheading of a 15-year-old Hindu girl, Mehak Kumari, when she declared that she had been forced to convert to Islam. Cases of forceful conversion have always existed in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, but concern is growing because of the increasing number of cases.

Every year around 1 000 women and girls are victims of kidnapping, rape and forced conversion. In February, the forced abduction, conversion and marriage of Huma Younus, a 14-year-old Christian girl, was deemed valid under Sharia law by a Pakistani court, as she had already had her first menstrual cycle.

In the last Commission GSP+ assessment of Pakistan the high number of kidnappings and forced conversions of mainly underage girls was highlighted. The prerequisite for acceptance and retention of GSP+ is established on the basis of criteria and compliance with international conventions. However Pakistan continues to be a country of concern in terms of compliance.

1. With regard to women's rights and religious freedom, can the Commission justify how widespread kidnappings, rapes and forced conversions are in line within the compliance criteria?
2. Will the Commission consider suspending Pakistan's GSP+ preferences until religious freedoms and women's rights are upheld?