

Question for written answer E-005667/2020

to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Rule 138

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Subject: Release of 25 000 civilians from the Syrian al-Hol camp

On 5 October, the Kurdish Syrian authorities announced their intention to release some 25 000 civilians who had been detained for almost two years under degrading sanitary conditions in the al-Hol prison camp in the north-east of the country.

The al-Hol camp was built to house up to 10 000 people, but to date it accommodates some 65 000 prisoners, including 44 000 children. Moreover, the planned release will apparently not follow any carefully planned criteria but, on the contrary, will give priority to those from the liberated areas of Raqqa and Dayr az Zawr – now controlled by Kurdish forces – without any plan to reintegrate people into their towns or cities of origin.

In view of the above, can the Vice-President / High Representative answer the following questions:

1. How does he intend to ensure targeted monitoring of the health conditions of the thousands of civilians who are preparing to leave the camp, whose already alarming health and hygiene situation had been further exacerbated by the spread of COVID-19?
2. How will he ensure that the planned release will concern only civilians and not the 19 000 ISIS militiamen detained there?
3. Will he adopt a concrete stance in the final phase of the conflict, so as not to leave the geopolitical landscape to the strategic interests of Russia, Iran and Turkey, which could once again use the fate of millions of refugees and displaced persons as a means of blackmail?