

**Question for written answer E-006095/2020**

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

Rule 138

**Susanna Ceccardi (ID)**

**Subject:** Europe's role in the detention of Sicilian fishermen by the Libyan authorities

On 1 September 2020, eighteen fishermen from Mazara del Vallo were stopped by Libyan army units and taken to Benghazi during a fishing trip in international waters, about 35 nautical miles from the northern coast of Cyrenaica.

According to the Libyan authorities, the fishermen had not respected the EEZ (exclusive economic zone), unilaterally established by Libya in 2005 instead of the 12 marine miles of territorial waters laid down by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea signed in Montego Bay.

In response to repeated requests by Italy to release the fishermen, the Libyan authorities have allegedly requested the release of four Libyan nationals, sentenced by an Italian court for human trafficking and the death of 42 migrants.

This is ironic, not only because of the unjust detention that the eighteen fishermen are being forced to undergo and the Libyan authorities' request to free criminals, but also because North African fishing boats often plunder fish stocks off Sicily.

In light of the above, can the High Representative say:

1. whether he intends to strive to secure the immediate release of the eighteen fishermen unjustly detained;
2. what steps he will take in respect of the Libyan authorities who have imprisoned the fishermen?