

**Question for written answer E-001982/2021/rev.1**

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

Rule 138

**Peter van Dalen (PPE), Esther de Lange (PPE), Annie Schreijer-Pierik (PPE), Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR)**

**Subject:** Aramaic Syriac Christian monk Sefer (Aho) Bilecen sentenced to 25 months in prison in Turkey on false charges

On Wednesday, 7 April 2021, Aramaic Syriac Christian monk Sefer (Aho) Bilecen of the Mor Yakup monastery in the Tur Abdin region in south-east Turkey was sentenced to two years and one month in jail by the Mardin local court.

The monk is accused of 'providing support for a terrorist organisation'. He had simply given food to visitors to his monastery who had asked for help. He had no idea that those 'persons' were members of a 'terrorist' organisation. All the circumstances suggest that the monk was framed, on a charge of 'aiding terrorists', whereas he was acting out of charity.

The Turkish court's verdict against monk Aho is a blow to democratic principles, human rights and the protection of minorities and vulnerable groups in Turkey.

1. Does the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy agree that the verdict against Bilicen is yet another example of Turkey's human rights violations and acts of oppression against its Christian Aramese minority?
2. If so, will the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy ask the Turkish authorities for further clarification and information?
3. Will the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy address this case in his dialogue with the Turkish Government?