

**Question for written answer E-002853/2021
to the Commission**
Rule 138
Karlo Ressler (PPE)

Subject: Universal respect for freedom of religion

Freedom of religion is under threat across the globe. Indeed it is Christians who are most commonly subjected to persecution. According to some estimates, as many as 309 million Christians worldwide – or one in every eight – are currently suffering some form of discrimination. If we take other religions into account, the number of victims is substantially higher.

Several international instruments proclaim the freedom of religious belief to be a fundamental human right, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which stipulates in Article 10 that everyone has the right to freedom of religion. The EU guidelines of 24 June 2013 on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief constitute a further EU instrument and emphasise the universality of these rights.

As a space of freedom and democracy, the European Union must find ways to protect the most vulnerable. Just as it aims to do in a number of other areas, here too Europe must set a global example. Therefore, the appointment of the special envoy on freedom of religion at the beginning of May was a step in the right direction.

What further initiatives can the Commission use to better protect victims of religious persecution, and how can it enforce respect for the freedom of religion when concluding international agreements with third countries?