

**Question for written answer E-003711/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Dominique Bilde (ID)

Subject: International people trafficking and Bangladeshi migrants

The US Department of State's 2021 report on people trafficking draws attention to the plight of the Bangladeshi migrants who are victims of the 'kafala' system in place in a number of Islamic countries (especially for domestic work)¹.

The report notes that '21,230 Bangladeshi workers returned from Saudi Arabia during the reporting period, many likely domestic workers'. However, 'the government did not report screening any of the returning workers for signs of trafficking'. Some of the returnees to Bangladesh were penalised for sullyng 'the image of the nation'².

On 23 May 2015, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina branded migrants leaving the country (some of whom were stranded at sea) 'mentally sick', said they risked bringing the country into disrepute and warned that those who left 'illegally'³ could be punished.

Bangladesh received EUR 655 000 000 in European development aid for the 2014-2020 period⁴ and enjoys preferential trade arrangements with the EU under its 'Everything but Arms' scheme⁵. Does the Commission intend to reconsider these benefits in view of these practices, which do not help fight people trafficking and are likely to deter some migrants from returning?

¹ 'Trafficking in Persons Report', US Department of State, June 2021.

² 'Some of whom the government penalized on ambiguous charges of "damaging the image of the nation" without appropriately screening for trafficking.'

³ 'Irregular Migration from Bangladesh to the Gulf: Is Combatting It a Governance Challenge?' AKM Ahsan Ullah. *Skillful Survivals: Irregular Migration to the Gulf*, 'Philippe Fargues and Nasra M. Shah (eds), Migration Policy Center.

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/where-we-work/bangladesh_en – 'European bilateral development aid to Bangladesh for 2014-2020 amounts to € 655,000,000.'

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/bangladesh/>