

**Question for written answer E-003967/2021/rev.1
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Charlie Weimers (ECR)

Subject: Illegal migration to the EU by way of flights to Belarus from Iraq

On 1 August 2021, Lithuania detained 287 illegal migrants, which is more than the number detained in 2018, 2019 and 2020 combined. According to the Financial Times, the vast majority were Iraqis who had flown to Minsk before heading north and entering the EU illegally¹.

The EU has established a formal agreement on migration with Iraq and continues to provide it with millions of euros in humanitarian assistance and development cooperation aid²³.

According to Commissioner Johansson, EU diplomats have been engaged in 'intensive contacts' with Iraqi officials, which she claims have been 'more constructive than we had hoped'.

As of the first week of August, the state carrier Iraqi Airways was still offering flights from Iraq to Minsk and almost all flights from Baghdad to Minsk had been sold out for the month of August⁴.

1. In view of the recent incursions into Lithuanian territory by Belarusian officers in riot gear, what steps has the Commission taken to ensure that flights from Iraq to Belarus are stopped and remain stopped until Belarus stops pushing migrants into the EU⁵?
2. Has the Commission raised the possibility of cutting off EU aid to Iraq in order to successfully suspend flights by the state carrier Iraqi Airways to Belarus?

¹ Almost 4,000 migrants have been detained by Lithuania this year, compared with 81 for the whole of 2020 according to the Financial Times. EU pledges aid to Lithuania to combat illegal migration from Belarus <https://www.ft.com/content/81d1cfb4-dd4b-4186-93f5-1ee8bfd3dcb>

² https://ec.europa.eu/echo/printpdf/where/middle-east/iraq_en

³ https://eeas.europa.eu/csdp-missions-operations/euam-iraq/58654/annual-lists-awarded-contracts-euam-iraq_en

⁴ A search of the Iraqi Airways online flight booking system shows the daily 8:30 AM departure from Baghdad to Minsk only has seats available on a single flight during the period 3-31 August.

⁵ https://twitter.com/LT_MFA_Stratcom/status/1427709573125791744