

**Question for written answer E-004944/2021**

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

Rule 138

**Manu Pineda** (The Left), **Marc Botenga** (The Left), **Marisa Matias** (The Left), **Nikolaj Villumsen** (The Left), **Sandra Pereira** (The Left)

Subject: Arrest of Ms Shatha Odeh and harassment of the Health Work Committees by Israel

On 7 July 2021, Ms Shatha Odeh, director of the Health Work Committees (HWC), was arrested by the Israeli army. Her detention followed the arrests of Spanish citizen Juana Ruiz Sánchez, Tayseer Abu Sharbak and Saïd Abdat, all HWC employees. On 9 June, Israeli authorities shut down HWC headquarters for six months in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure, as well as the arrests of HWC personnel, were denounced by various UN Special Rapporteurs, who explicitly called 'on Israeli authorities to release all three human rights defenders immediately'. HWC is a former recipient of EU funds, and still receives EU Member State funds. Referring to the EU Guidelines on human rights defenders, we ask:

1. Has the Vice-President / High Representative (VP/HR) taken any measures to demand that immediately release human rights defender Shatha Odeh?
2. Has the VP/HR taken any measures to demand that Israel 'stop targeting these human rights defenders', to paraphrase the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)?
3. Has the VP/HR called on Israel to 'put an end to the harassment of health workers', to paraphrase Amnesty International, and to allow HWC to carry out crucial healthcare services co-financed by EU Member States in the midst of the pandemic?