

Question for written answer E-000564/2022

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

Rule 138

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Subject: Taliban crackdown on journalism – the case of two TV reporters detained in Afghanistan

According to *The Free Speech Hub*, Waris Hasrat and Aslam Hijab, journalists from a local news channel, were arrested by the Taliban on 31 January 2022 and released on 2 February. The detentions came a day after a guest had criticised the Taliban regime during a live broadcast debate.

These events have occurred in the context of escalating attacks on dissidents and media freedom, which, according to human rights organisations, represent a grave threat to freedom of expression.

Hundreds of journalists have left Afghanistan since August 2021, for fear of Taliban reprisals or because of problems with practicing their profession under the new rules. According to a Reporters Without Borders survey, at least 40 % of media outlets in Afghanistan have disappeared and more than 80 % of women journalists have lost their jobs since the Taliban takeover.

1. Will the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy ask for clarification regarding the circumstances of and reasons for the arrest and detention of these journalists?
2. What measures have he and the Commission already taken or what measures do they envisage taking to make the Taliban authorities refrain from arresting journalists, activists and academics and to hold them accountable for their ongoing attacks on media freedom and the freedom of expression?

Supporters¹

¹ This question is supported by Members other than the authors: Rosa D'Amato (Verts/ALE), Antoni Comín i Oliveres (NI), Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó (NI)