

**Question for oral answer O-000062/2021**

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

Rule 136

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Subject: The EU's responsibility to protect local staff targeted due to their working relations with the EU

The EU has a responsibility to protect local staff targeted due to their working relations with the EU, including those working with common security and defence policy missions, EU delegations, the Commission's Directorates-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations and for International Partnerships, and other EU measures, programmes and projects.

The EU institutions employ local staff in numerous third countries, including crisis-affected and war-torn regions. As their employer, the EU bears a responsibility for the safety of its local staff, especially those whose lives are at risk on account of their working relations with the EU.

However, the emergency in Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover in August 2021 has demonstrated an urgent need to clarify and improve protection measures. We would therefore ask the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) to address the following questions:

1. Lessons learnt: what lessons have been drawn from the experiences of the Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan 2021 with regard to the protection and evacuation of the local staff of EU institutions, including contracted staff and implementing partners of EU-funded projects?
2. Definition of local staff and their protection needs: i) how does the EU define 'local staff' under existing protection schemes; ii) what kind of protection measures do the EU institutions envisage for their local staff; and iii) what changes in i) and ii) does the VP/HR deem necessary following the experiences in Afghanistan?
3. Rules of procedure and coordination with the Member States: i) what are the formal procedures for protecting local staff in the event of an emergency, including in cases of evacuation; ii) what coordination mechanisms have been established with the Member States, with particular regard to issuing visas and relocation; iii) under which EU budget lines are these costs borne; and iv) what changes in i), ii) and iii) does the VP/HR deem necessary following the experiences in Afghanistan?

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Lapses: 24.12.2021