

**Question for written answer P-003050/2013/rev.1
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Olle Schmidt (ALDE)

Subject: VP/HR - Extortion of EU citizens by Eritrean authorities

The Eritrean regime systematically oppresses Eritreans living in exile in many EU Member States. Through intimidation and blackmail, Eritrean consulates and embassies seek to oblige Eritreans living in Europe to pay a 2 % income tax and mandatory 'donations' for its military. The United Nations have reported that those who refuse to pay are subjected to threats, intimidation and coercion.

A one-party state with a population of six million, Eritrea is one of the world's most authoritarian and least developed countries. Nonetheless, it has managed to arm, train and finance armed groups throughout the region, including Al-Shabab, a group affiliated to Al-Qaeda. With no measurable domestic economy, the country is largely dependent on Eritreans living abroad.

Does the Vice-President/High Representative accept that European citizens are blackmailed by persons granted diplomatic status in the Member States? If not, will the Vice-President/High Representative take action against the Eritrean authorities and its diplomatic representations in Europe?

With the adoption by the UN Security Council of its resolution 2023 (2011) on 5 December 2011, the Eritrean authorities have been under additional pressure to conform to international norms, and the collection of extraterritorial taxes and use of mining revenues has been placed under scrutiny. This decision was reinforced by measures imposed by the governments of the United Kingdom and Germany to prevent Eritrean authorities from collecting taxes in their territories.

What can the Vice-President/High Representative do to enhance cooperation to reinforce a ban on the collection of extraterritorial taxes in the Member States?