

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000140/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Matthieu Valet (P/E)
(15 January 2025)

Subject: Backsliding of women's rights under Abu Mohammed al-Jolani's interim government in Syria

Syria's interim government, led by former al-Qaeda member Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, has said that it is committed to upholding minorities' rights and defending women's rights, with a view to restoring its image on the world stage. Its recent actions, however, have revealed its real intentions and its Islamist and dogmatic view of society.

Abu Mohammed al-Jolani's refusal to shake hands with German Minister of Foreign Affairs Annalena Baerbock and the appointment of Islamist judge Shadi al-Waisi as Minister of Justice clearly demonstrate its radical approach. Videos showing him ordering the execution of two women in Idlib in the name of Sharia highlight his explicit support of repressive practices against women.

Lastly, education reforms to replace the school curriculum on 'defending the nation' with 'defending Allah' open the door to radical Islamic education removing any references to the theory of evolution and much of the science programme.

1. What is the Commission's stance on the reforms and appointments made by Syria's interim government, particularly those that undermine women's rights?
2. Does it intend to condemn these measures and take action to ensure women's rights are protected in Syria?

Submitted: 15.1.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(21 March 2025)

The EU has a long-standing history supporting gender equality and women's rights in Syria. This has been done through support to Syrian women's civil society, humanitarian support with a strong gender and protection lens, participation in the United Nations-led political process (Syrian Women's Advisory Board and Civil Society Support Room), and support to international accountability mechanisms, which have carried out their mandates with a gender perspective.

During the EU's early interactions with the interim authorities, the High Representative/Vice-President, the Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, and the Commissioner for the Mediterranean have emphasised the need for women's full, effective and meaningful participation in the political process.

Throughout the transition, accountability and transitional justice processes should continue to have a gender perspective, ensure women are heard at all stages, and keep a victim and survivor-centred approach.

The EU takes note that the National Dialogue Conference that took place on 25 February 2025 included the participation of women, and that the Constitutional Committee announced on 2 March 2025 — and tasked with drafting a transitional constitutional declaration — includes two women among its seven members.

As part of its overall support, the EU will support efforts to maximise the role of civil society, women and non-armed political actors in Syria.

The EU calls for an inclusive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition process, guided by the respect for international law, human rights (including women's rights), fundamental freedoms, pluralism and tolerance among all components of society.
