

(English version)

Question for written answer E-004114/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Thierry Mariani (PFE)
(17 October 2025)

Subject: Concerns about the case of Tayeb Benabderrahmane

The case of Tayeb Benabderrahmane, a French national sentenced to death in absentia in Qatar in May 2023, following a secret and unfair trial, continues to cause concern.

When Stéphane Séjourné was Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the matter was referred to him directly, but no significant diplomatic action was taken. Today, as a European Commissioner, his ambiguous role raises questions about his ability to defend, within the Commission, the fundamental rights of European citizens.

These doubts come against the backdrop of Qatargate, which has shed light on Qatar's direct and opaque influence on certain European institutions, raising legitimate concerns about the transparency and independence of EU action.

1. How does the Commission justify the presence of a Commissioner whose past inaction undermines his credibility in defending fundamental rights?
2. What guarantees can it offer that cases such as that of Mr Benabderrahmane are not minimised or hushed up under the influence of Qatari pressure groups?
3. Will it highlight this case, which has been marred by judicial corruption, at the eleventh Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption, scheduled to be held in Doha in December 2025, so that its participation is not seen as helping to rehabilitate Qatar's image?

Submitted: 17.10.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(13 January 2026)

The subject mentioned by the Honourable Member relates to the former responsibilities of the Executive Vice-President for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy as French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs and is not linked to the exercise of the Executive Vice-President's current responsibilities.

The findings of the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in Opinion No 28/2025 ⁽¹⁾ have been taken seriously and the EU has expressed concern about the conclusions reached, including those related to arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and the absence of fair-trial guarantees.

The EU engages directly and consistently with the Qatari authorities, both through the Delegation in Doha and in close coordination with the French authorities, raising the human rights implications in political and human rights dialogues.

Through these channels, the EU makes clear that it expects all partners, including Qatar, to respect international human rights obligations and to implement in good faith the recommendations of UN human rights mechanisms.

EU's participation in the 11th Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention against corruption will continue to be guided by longstanding commitment to human rights, the rule of law and the fight against corruption.

These principles shape the EU's relations with Qatar and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and were reaffirmed at the first EU-GCC Summit held in Brussels on 16 October 2024. Such international fora are opportunities to advance transparency, accountability and respect for international norms.

⁽¹⁾ Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Opinion No 28/2025 (adopted 8 April 2025), concerning the arbitrary detention of Tayeb Benabderrahmane (UN Doc. A/HRC/WGAD/2025/28).