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Answer given by Mr Síkela
on behalf of the European Commission
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Freedom of religion or belief is a long-standing key priority of the EU's external human rights policy.

The EU Delegations promote bilateral dialogue to address human rights issues and are regularly in contact with national authorities, national human rights commissions, local civil society organisations and other relevant stakeholders, to advocate for, promote and protect the rights of vulnerable groups, including religious minorities. As part of accession negotiations and EU association agreements, the EU promotes the alignment of relevant legislation with the EU *acquis* and standards. The EU monitors the exercise of this right in enlargement countries and reports upon it annually.

The EU and its Member States have also funded many projects on prevention of violence, peacebuilding and support to populations affected by violence, including through humanitarian support.

Together with the Team Europe diplomatic presence, the EU's financial cooperation in or with partner countries, provides leverage that allows the EU to wield its influence.

Based on standard clauses in all EU contracts[1], where human rights violations occur, funding can be suspended or terminated. Those provisions were strengthened in the most recent update to the contractual templates in January 2025.

The Commission remains committed to addressing these challenges and fostering a safer and more tolerant environment for all, in close cooperation with the next Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief.

[1] https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/spaces/ExactExternalWiki/pages/152798822/Annexes#Annexes-_QW5uZXhlcy1Bbm5leGVzRShDaC42KTpHcmFudHM.