

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000163/26
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Sander Smit (PPE), Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR)
(15 January 2026)

Subject: Situation of Cardinal Louis Raphaël Sako

Following the midnight mass by Cardinal Louis Raphaël Sako in Saint Joseph's Cathedral in Baghdad, Iraq, the word 'normalisation' — which he used in his homily — led to controversy. The Cardinal, a key Christian figure in the Middle East, subsequently received death threats ⁽¹⁾.

The Christian community in Iraq has been under serious pressure since the war in that country in 2003. While, at the time, there were some 1.5 million Christians still living there, there are now just a few hundred thousand. Threats against spiritual leaders such as Cardinal Sako have direct consequences for the security and future prospects of this community.

1. What is the Vice-President/High Representative's position vis-à-vis these events in Iraq, including the death threats against Cardinal Sako? Does it publicly condemn them, and has it contacted the Iraqi authorities to ensure the safety of the Cardinal and of the Christian community in general?
2. In what manner does the Vice-President/High Representative coordinate diplomatic efforts with EU Member States to collectively bring pressure to bear on the Iraqi government at European level in order to protect the Cardinal and Christian minorities, including the Aramean heritage?
3. In what way has the Commission placed the safety and support of the Christian minority, including the active protection of Aramean and other millennia-old heritage, at the heart of its specific development policy and aid programmes in Iraq?

Submitted: 15.1.2026

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

The EU condemns the threats received by the Chaldean Patriarch of Baghdad following a homily delivered in Saint Joseph's Cathedral in Baghdad.

Iraq's religious diversity is intrinsically linked to the country's identity and cultural heritage. The EU expresses its unequivocal support to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, with full respect to its ethnic and religious diversity.

The EU Delegation is in regular contact with representatives of Iraqi religious communities, including the Chaldean Patriarch of Baghdad.

Messages on respect of all minorities and protection of freedom of religion or belief are consistently conveyed by the EU in its exchanges with Iraqi officials at all levels and feature on the agenda of bilateral institutional bodies such as the EU-Iraq Subcommittee on Democracy and Human Rights.

Moreover, the substantial EU support package for Iraq ⁽¹⁾ — ranging from humanitarian assistance and development aid to a security mission on security sector reform — is designed to benefit all aspects of Iraqi society, including minorities.

¹ <https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/iraqi-cardinal-faces-threats-after>.

⁽¹⁾ https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/middle-east-gulf/iraq_en.