

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000477/26
to the Commission
Tomislav Sokol (PPE), Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR)
(5 February 2026)**

Subject: The targeting of Christians in Türkiye: alleged discriminatory expulsions of Protestants and lack of effective judicial remedies

Robert Andrew Hoard, a United States national, resided legally in Türkiye for nearly 30 years before being expelled under the administrative ‘national security’ code N-82, and without criminal charges, disclosure of evidence or access to effective judicial remedies. His situation appears representative of a broader pattern affecting only members of the foreign Protestant community. According to the Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey, between 2019 and 2024 at least 132 foreign Christians were expelled from Türkiye, affecting more than 300 individuals, including family members. This is particularly concerning given that Türkiye is both a candidate country for accession to the EU and a member of the Council of Europe.

1. How does the Commission assess the compatibility of these practices with Türkiye’s obligations regarding freedom of religion, non-discrimination and the rule of law?
2. Does the Commission consider that treating these cases solely as immigration matters, without a clear legal basis or without evidentiary standards, and relying on secret intelligence reports to justify the expulsions, risks obscuring their religious and discriminatory nature?
3. Has the Commission raised cases of expelled foreign Christians, including that of Robert Andrew Hoard, with the Turkish authorities in the framework of EU-Türkiye dialogue?

Submitted: 5.2.2026

**Answer given by Ms Kos on behalf of the European Commission
(17 April 2026)**

The Commission is aware of the expulsions and addressed the issue during an emergency debate at the European Parliament on 12 February 2026.

As an EU candidate country and member of the Council of Europe, Türkiye is expected to apply the highest democratic standards and practices.

Measures affecting freedom of thought, conscience, and religion must be proportionate and should not be treated as national security issues without justification or judicial remedies.

The Commission recalls that according to Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion and of manifesting it.

The latter shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

The 2025 Enlargement report on Türkiye ⁽¹⁾ notes the deportations of foreign Protestant pastors and Jehovah’s Witness ministers and the ongoing cases ⁽²⁾ in the European Court of Human Rights.

It states that the situation of freedom of thought, conscience and religion need to be improved and that the EU’s serious concerns about the continued deterioration of democratic standards, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary and respect for fundamental rights were not addressed.

The Commission will continue to call on Türkiye to comply with its obligations under international law, and to respect and protect, and fulfil human rights and the rule of law, and will continue to raise these issues in its contacts with the Turkish authorities, including in the context of the relevant sub-committee established under the Association Agreement with Türkiye ⁽³⁾.

⁽¹⁾ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/turkiye-report-2025_en.

⁽²⁾ <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-234570%22%5D%7D> and <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/#%7B%22itemid%22:%5B%22001-248520%22%5D%7D>.

⁽³⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:f8e2f9f4-75c8-4f62-ae3f-b86ca5842eee.0008.02/DOC_2&format=PDF.