

(English version)

Priority question for written answer P-000008/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Assita Kanko (ECR)
(3 January 2025)

Subject: Diplomatic relations with the new Syrian transitional government versus women's rights and respect for the EU

German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock is visiting Syria to strengthen diplomatic ties with representatives of the transitional government formed after rebels ousted dictator Assad. These new ties do not seem so firm to me when we see how scandalously the German minister was treated by her male colleague. I watched a video of the encounter, shared by a German journalist from ZDF, several times, and as a woman and an MEP I could not believe my eyes when I saw not only the man's unwillingness to shake her hand but also her attitude of complete proactive submissiveness on behalf of all of us.

1. The EU, including Germany, must play a crucial role in ensuring that the change of power in Syria does not become a victory for ISIS but a path to a better future for all. When I see the attitude of the German minister on our behalf, I am very concerned. Does the EU still want to defend our principles and the European way of life, and is it honest about women's rights?
2. Will the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy be going to Syria soon? If the new leadership tries to treat her like they did Ms Baerbock, how will she counter this?

Submitted: 3.1.2025

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

The Women, Peace and Security agenda ⁽¹⁾ is one of the core principles of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, and a key tool in ensuring that the rights, agency and protection of women and girls are observed and upheld at all times.

The agenda aims to ensure meaningful and equal participation of women in all institutions and processes of conflict prevention, peace-making, peacebuilding and post-conflict rehabilitation.

Additionally, the EU's strategic approach emphasises participation, gender mainstreaming and leading by example as crosscutting themes.

The EU's Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III) ⁽²⁾ aims to accelerate progress on empowering women and girls, and safeguard gains made on gender equality.

The EU has a long 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 gender lens, participation in the United Nations-led political process (Syrian Women's Advisory Board and Civil Society Support Room), and also by supporting the various accountability mechanisms, which have done work with a gender perspective.

The EU is supporting a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led inclusive ⁽³⁾ transition, based on respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, for all its citizens.

Regarding the interactions with the new leadership, the Foreign Minister of the temporary authorities met with the High Representative/Vice-President in Riyadh on 12 January 2025 in the margins of the meeting on Syria hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On 17 January 2025, the Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management visited Damascus, where she announced a new humanitarian package for 2025 amounting to EUR 235 million to support Syrians, both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries.

⁽¹⁾ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n00/720/18/pdf/n0072018.pdf?OpenElement>

⁽²⁾ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf

⁽³⁾ As set out in the Council conclusions on the situation in the Middle East of 27 January 2025 — <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2025/01/27/>