

Question for written answer E-003503/2020/rev.1

to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Rule 138

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Subject: Mercenaries operating in third countries

It is being reported that, despite the existence of the International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, many states, notably in Africa, continue to rely on mercenaries. They are often used to help block and overcome insurgencies in territories within their borders where state forces struggle to maintain a measure of order and security.

The EU has had its fair share of experience with citizens from Member States travelling to conflict zones as foreign fighters. In 2015, Parliament's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee recommended ways to discourage the recruitment of EU citizens as foreign fighters. Private military companies that are hired to carry out work normally assigned to state armies are not necessarily bound by the same ethical standards, human rights considerations or checks and balances as states armies, and it can be expected that individual mercenaries hired on a personal basis are even less so.

1. Amid reports that African governments in particular continue to hire mercenaries, many of them EU nationals with prior experience in conflict zones, how does the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative approach this subject in its relations with third countries?
2. What principles guide its dealings with third country governments on this issue?