

**Question for written answer P-011426/2013
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 117
Thijs Berman (S&D)**

Subject: VP/HR - Seizure of the Greenpeace vessel Arctic Sunrise and its crew

On 19 September 2013 the Greenpeace vessel Arctic Sunrise was illegally boarded and seized by the Russian Federation authorities, when its crew members were staging a peaceful protest near the Prirazlomnaya oil platform in an attempt to alert both the public and the Russian authorities to the risks involved in mining in the Arctic seas. The vessel has been brought to Murmansk, while crew members are being detained and have been charged with 'piracy', facing a potential sentence of up to 15 years' imprisonment.

According to Article 101 of the internationally agreed United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), piracy is defined as 'any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft'.

Obviously, the Greenpeace crew members were not acting for 'private ends' but rather for what they see as a public and global interest, and they acted in a peaceful manner.

Does the High Representative agree that the Russian authorities' reaction to the Greenpeace protest is completely disproportionate and unacceptable in democratic states?

Does the High Representative agree that charging the crew with 'piracy' wilfully overlooks the fact that this was a peaceful action by an NGO in which the members acted not as 'pirates' but as concerned citizens?

Can, and will, the High Representative put urgent diplomatic pressure on the Russian authorities for the immediate and unconditional release of the Greenpeace vessel and its crew?