

To: The High Representative of the EU for foreign affairs  
and security policy / Vice-President of the Commission



Concerns: church closures in Algeria

Strasbourg, 16 February 2023

Dear High Representative / Vice-President,  
Dear Mr Borrell,

We, the undersigned MEPs, write to you to express our concern regarding the deteriorating state of freedom of religion or belief in Algeria. Followers of non-Muslim religions in Algeria face great difficulty in freely worshipping and expressing their beliefs. One of the most pressing issues is the ongoing and increasing pressure on protestant churches. Since 2017, around 20 protestant churches have been closed by the government on the grounds of Ordinance 06-03, prohibiting non-Muslims organizations for establishing place of worship without authorization by the government. Although the Evangelical Protestant Association (EPA) has applied for authorization, it has never received an adequate response from the National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Groups.

The churches that have been closed by the government remain closed until this day. As the European Union is committed to upholding fundamental rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, in its external relations, we call on you to address this matter with urgency in your bilateral contacts with the government of Algeria. The EU must urge the government of Algeria to process the application for authorization by the EPA and other non-Muslim religious organizations without delay, and unseal the churches that have been closed. To that end, it would be good if EU representatives would have an exchange of views with the Algerian National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Groups.

Besides, we ask you to encourage the government of Algeria to work towards decriminalization of blasphemy and proselytization. Over the last year, Christians in Algeria have been persecuted for vaguely formulated charges, such as 'shaking the faith of a Muslim' and 'poisoning the minds of youths'. We believe that such accusations and the enforcement of blasphemy laws in general do compromise the freedom of religion or belief and that the EU must firmly speak out against it in its dialogue with Algeria.

We trust you will give this matter careful consideration and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Peter van Dalen (EPP)

Carlo Fidanza (ECR)

György Hölvényi (EPP)

Lars Patrick Berg (ECR)

Miriam Lexmann (EPP)

Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR)

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