

# The strange shyness of the EU towards China

– by Marco Respinti –

***A seminar of scholars and politicians in the European Parliament loses an excellent opportunity to put respect for human rights at the top of priorities –***

Bitter Winter (02.02.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2DPRZs0>– In the second half of May, the member states of the European Union (EU) will hold elections to renew the European Parliament (EP), and it is logical that, one after the other, hot topics are surfacing. One of these is undoubtedly the relations that the EU has, and above all will have, with the other giants of the international political scene: for example, China. Especially in a historical moment in which the Asian colossus is overtly expanding its power and its grip through the Belt and Road Initiative in spite of the fact that, although it has been the protagonist of the dizzying and proverbial economic growth, it is now lagging behind in the midst of the recent slowdown in its manufacturing output, the decline of the renminbi (Chinese yuan) compared to the US dollar, and the clash on tariffs with the United States of America (the effects of which are also felt in the EU).

Therefore, it makes a lot of sense to have a seminar like the one organized by the German representatives to the EP, Jo Leinen, a Social Democrat, and Reinhard Butiköfer, of the Greens, respectively, president and vice president of the Delegation of the EP for relations with the People's Republic of China, entitled *Political values in Europe-China relations*. It took place in the Altiero Spinelli building of the EP in Brussels on January 30, and featured Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova from the Latvian Institute of International Affairs

in Riga; Alice Ekman from the Institut français des relations internationales in Paris; Mikko Huotari from the Mercator Institute for China Studies in Berlin, Germany; Tamas Matura, from the Corvinus University in Budapest, Hungary; Miguel Otero Iglesias, from the Elcano Royal Institute in Madrid, Spain; and Tim Nicholas Rühlig, from the Swedish Institute of International Affairs in Stockholm.

### ***Human rights not at the top of the agenda***

That said, at the cost of appearing naïve, even very much naïve, one would expect that talks about political and commercial relations among countries cannot disregard the respect for human rights and the fundamental liberties of the person. If it makes sense that two despotic countries find it easy to understand each other politically and economically, it also makes sense to expect that a democratic state demands from its probable or possible political and economic partner to respect at least the standards of democracy that it personally observes. How can one think that a democratic country can deal at political and economic level with another if the latter arbitrarily imprisons, tortures, abuses and even kills its citizens? You do not need to be morally superior to understand that trading with a country where human dignity is trampled daily is not good for affairs; even cynics get it. In fact, everyone understands how economically risky, not to say detrimental, it is to maintain commercial exchanges – where all is based on trust, compliance with agreements, respect for rules and transparency – with a treacherous and double partner, used to acting outside the law, to lie and to subjugate rather than to benefit its citizens.

Why then (and here is all my intentional naïveté announced above), when it comes to relations between the democratic states of Europe and a totalitarian country like China, are human rights not at the top of the agenda? The seminar of January 30<sup>th</sup> in Brussels, for example, didn't put them on top

of the list.

### ***Raise the stakes***

Well, a few words were said, some facts were mentioned, but with the handbrake pulled, stealthily. As if the scholars who intervened knew, consciously or subconsciously, not to push things beyond a certain limit. One could say that this is the way scholars operate since they express themselves differently from activists. True, but only partially. Yes, scholars do their job in a different manner from that of the activists, and rightly so; on the other hand, even scholars are able, if they want to, to put things clearly. Of course, differently from activists, but certainly not in a less straightforward way.

After all, in the Brussels seminar, Mikka Huotari explicitly said that several things happening in China are incompatible with the standards that the EU countries are accustomed to. Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova has specified that Latvians have little sympathy for the model of government that dominates China as well as for the flippant approach that Beijing adopts towards international law. Tamsas Matura reported that, if Hungary looks favorably on China, it is not so for the Czech Republic and Poland, whose societies are amply impatient towards the “Beijing model”, adding that, in these assessments, it is always necessary to carefully distinguish the attitudes of the governments from the orientations of the citizens. Alice Ekman has opportunely noted that, when dealing with China, one cannot take anything for granted so that each time it’s necessary to make sense of the words defining their meaning. Rights, law, government, and freedom do not have the same meaning in China as in Europe.

But then, if the scholars who spoke at the seminar feel some uneasiness, and somehow reveal it, why can’t we completely turn priorities upside down (I am still intentionally naïve) and make way for respect of human rights and fundamental

liberties of a person a binding paradigm of any other yet legitimate political and economic question? Why, in short, can't we start from those tenets, explicitly saying that as long as China does not change its attitude on human rights and fundamental liberties, there can be no partnership?

Now (and here my naïveté ends), in the globalized world, it is not possible to retreat in some splendid isolation. It is evident that, like it or not, the rest of the world has to come to terms with the Chinese economic power. But it is equally valid that the stakes can be raised, that the chip of respect for human rights can be put on the table. And it is not true that if one did it, China would leave the table: in order to trade, there must always be at least two.

### ***Two kickers***

Certain self-censorships are thus inexplicable. To scholars, who do not act in politics, it wouldn't cost much to speak openly. At the price of seeming idealists, they can afford it because they hold no political office, and if they speak frankly, they may even benefit from it.

For politicians, however, the price may be higher. They have an ideological agenda to follow and have no intention of affording themselves certain liberties. This is a mischievous statement of mine, but the conclusion of the Brussels seminar on Wednesday has helped to nurture it.

Some thirty minutes prior to the conclusion of the seminar, once the speakers had all given their presentations, Mr. Butiköfer, who acted as the coordinator of the table, opened the Q&A session. He collected all the interventions from the public and then gave back the floor to the speakers. Out of the many questions, two touched the hidden heart of the problem. The first (the first ever) was Ryan Barry's of the Uyghur Congress in Munich, Germany: he asked if the news of the million (at least) Uyghurs that the CCP unlawfully detains

for religious and ethnic reasons in the Xinjiang's "transformation through education" camps have had an echo in the European countries reviewed by the speakers. Another question was posed by a Chinese lady who asked if the politicians realized that any consideration on China couldn't ignore the fact that China professes a Communist ideology and practices a Communist ideocracy, which aims at total domination and degradation of people. At this point, two kickers followed.

The first was Mr. Butiköfer's management of the Q&A: he summarized all the audience's questions, inviting the speakers to choose their favorite to answer but omitting the two mentioned above, Uyghurs and Communism. Then, he gave the floor to the speakers in reverse order compared to their first run of interventions; they chose to answer everything but the two above mentioned questions, perhaps because the moderator omitted them. Thus, at time expired, with an attendant who signaled to Mr. Butiköfer that it was time to leave the room to a subsequent event, Mikka Huotari took the floor again. And here is the second kicker: he meritoriously recovered the unanswered question on Uyghurs. But at that point, there was no more time, and the question remained suspended in the void (the one on Communism never reappeared on the horizon).

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**CHINA: All religions are persecuted in China: the case of Catholics (By B.**

# Cervellera)



Brussels (AsiaNews) – *“All religions in China are persecuted”*: This is the conclusion of Austrian Member of Parliament, Dr. Josef Weidenholzer, at a conference held yesterday afternoon at the European Parliament in Brussels on the theme *“Religious Freedom in China”*. The meeting organised by representatives of the People’s Party and the socialists, had several guest speakers who offered their witness to a packed hall. After a brief introduction by parliamentarians Bas Belder (Dutch) and Christian Dan Preda (Romanian), the following spoke: Bob Fu, founder and director of China Aid; Kuzzat Altay, Uighur exile in the United States; Marco Respinti, director of Bitter Winter; Willy Fautré, director of Human Rights without Frontiers; Fr. Bernardo Cervellera, editor of AsiaNews. From the audience emerged testimonies of Tibetan Buddhists,

*Taoists, sects, branded by the regime as “evil cults”. Below we publish the intervention of the editor of AsiaNews.*

**AsiaNews (24.01.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2G70S0j>– In a meeting on religious freedom in China in the Brussels office of the European Parliament, the testimonies of Protestant Christians, Uighurs, Catholics. The voices of Tibetan Buddhists, Taoists and sects. The intervention offered by the editor of AsiaNews.**

On January 14, AsiaNews published [a “Christmas diary” written by a Chinese priest](#), Fr. Stanislaus, who recounts the difficulties experienced by Chinese Catholics in a province of the Northeast. For “security” reasons Christmas Masses must be controlled by the police; young people under the age of 18 cannot take part; the New Year banners of good wishes, which the Chinese hang on their doorstep and with which Christians wish peace and blessings from God, cannot be sold.

On the same day, the foreign ministry spokesperson, Ms. Hua [Chunying], said: “You do not understand China. Do not you know how many Buddhist and Taoist temples and Christian churches in China operate legally? According to the law, Chinese citizens enjoy full religious freedom! We have taken preventive measures against terrorists and extremists, to allow so many ordinary people to fully enjoy normal religious freedom! ”

Perhaps in China all young Catholics under 18 are considered “terrorists”, forbidding them to attend Christmas Mass, Sunday Mass, and catechesis. To allow them to “fully enjoy religious freedom”, in primary and secondary schools of various provinces of China (Anhui, Henan, Inner Mongolia), representatives of the Ministry of Education have forbidden pupils and students to celebrate Christmas ( and the Lunar New Year), to exchange gifts or to participate in religious ceremonies; in several provinces (Hebei, Shaanxi, Yunnan) [Christmas celebrations and decorations were forbidden in the cities](#), seen as “[an attack on Chinese culture](#)”, a

submission to Western “spiritual pollution”.

Apart from the historical error of considering Christianity as a “religion of the West” (given that Jesus was born in Asia and that Christianity arrived in China in the 7th century from Iraq), it is clear that the Chinese Communist Party is conducting a veritable “religious war” on Christianity and Catholics, all in the name of “security” and “nationalist patriotism”.

### ***In the name of security***

In the name of security, religious activities are divided into “normal” and “illegal”, although there are no differences in rite or execution between the two. What makes a religious activity “normal” is its submission to the control of political authorities: bishops, priests, places of worship registered with the Ministry of Religious Affairs; registered publications; registered pastoral plans; registered times; registered participants. Added to this are the ubiquitous cameras in the parish offices; the permits to ask to meet Chinese or foreign Catholic personnel; the continued presence of the police around or inside the places of worship.

“Illegal” religious activities are those carried out with personnel or in places that are not under control. The Catholics who carry out these activities, defined as “criminals”, claim their freedom as guaranteed by the Chinese constitution, but risk arrests, fines, expropriation of buildings, or their destruction.

In 1994, the UN envoy for religious freedom, Abdelfattah Amor, asked China to eliminate this difference between “normal” and “illegal” activities, but this request went unheard.

It should be noted that this division – inserted by the government – creates the so-called official Church (of “normal” activities) and the underground (or unofficial) Church.

The instrument of this division is the Patriotic Association, guarantor of “normality”, whose statutes violate the integrity of the Catholic faith because it wants to build a Church “independent” from the universal Church and the Holy See. Official Church members agree to register as the “lesser evil”; those of the underground Church categorically refuse to register. But both communities suffer violations of religious freedom and risk elimination: the former from a suffocating control; the latter from arrests, disappearances, killings, destruction.

The situation has become even more radical with the launch of the [New Regulations on Religious Activities on February 1, 2018](#).

Under the new regulations the official communities must submit to the control of the dimensions, colors and position of crosses; the height and position of statues; texts posted online, with a ban on the live streaming of all ceremonies. The underground communities do not even have the right to exist.

Activities carried out in unregistered places and with unregistered personnel are subject to heavy fines: between 100 and 300 thousand yuan for “unauthorized” activities (Article 64).

In addition to incurring fines, sites that host “illegal” activities will be closed down, seized and subject to forfeiture in state assets. For several months police and representatives of the Religious Affairs Bureau have been systematically meeting bishops, priests and lay faithful of the underground communities for “a cup of tea” and “to advise” them to register in the official communities.]

This explains the various “forced vacations” of [Wenzhou bishop Peter Shao Zhumin](#), or [the indoctrination classes](#) of priests in Hebei, Henan, Inner Mongolia, ...

Underground bishops and priests are “advised” to register in the official communities, taking them to “forced vacations” or to “indoctrination classes”.

It is our duty to at least name the victims of this persecution: Msgr. James Su Zhimin, underground bishop of Baoding (Hebei), who has been missing in police custody since 1997; Fr. Liu Honggeng of Baoding, missing since 2015; [Fr. Wei Heping \(also known as Yu Heping\), who died in 2015 in mysterious and suspicious circumstances.](#)

There are also victims in the official Church: [Msgr. Thaddeus Ma Daqin](#), bishop of Shanghai, since 2012 in isolation and under house arrest for having dared to leave the Patriotic Association; [Fr. Liu Jiandong, of Zhengzhou](#) (Henan), expelled from his parish in October 2018 and forbidden to live as a priest, for having dared to organize meetings with young people even under the age of 18.

For all of this, since February 2018 many communities have been forcibly closed, [convents](#) and places of worship destroyed with bulldozers, [including some shrines](#) in Shanxi and Guizhou. It is estimated that in 2018 at least 30 Catholic churches have been closed and destroyed.

But there are also churches (official) that are destroyed in the name of urban expansion – as in [Qianwang and Liangwang \(Shandong\)](#) – and whose land is seized for building development without any compensation.

### ***In the name of nationalist patriotism***

Another method of submission and elimination of Catholics is nationalist patriotism, or [“sinicization”](#). According to the dictates of Xi Jinping, the Church must not only assimilate Chinese culture, and express its creed with Chinese categories, but must create theologies, history, works of art according to the dictates of Chinese culture. Again it falls to the Patriotic Association to verify this is being done.

But the race for inculturation has also become iconoclasm with the destruction of works of art from the past (“too Western”) and that of external and internal church decoration, the demolition of crosses from bell towers, the destruction of domes and facades considered “not Chinese in style”. Patriotism obliges communities to hoist the Chinese flag on every religious building, to sing patriotic hymns before services, to hang a portrait of Xi Jinping even on the altars.

The provisional agreement between China and the Holy See, signed on September 22nd 2018, has not changed this situation. It is true that in some ways, the agreement is a conquest because for the first time in modern China history the Pope is recognized as head of the Catholic Church in China.

However, last December, Wang Zuonan, deputy chief of the United Front and former director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, once again stressed that the principles of independence and self-management will not be eliminated “at any time and under any circumstances”.

In words reportedly shared with one [of these] underground bishop [s], the Pope is said to have referred that if the agreement was not signed, China threatened to illegally ordain 45 bishops “independent” from the Holy See, creating the basis for a real schism. The agreement was therefore blackmail.

In addition, immediately after the signing of the agreement, in many regions of China the United Front and the Patriotic Association held rallies for priests and bishops explaining to them that “despite the agreement”, they had to work for the implementation of an independent Church. The destruction of crosses, churches, indoctrination sessions, arrests continued just as before the agreement, if not worse.

#### ***Four conclusions***

1. It is clear that the government and the Chinese

Communist Party are engaged in a real religious war to oust the God of Christians and replace Him with the god-Xi Jinping, which implies a total submission to the Communist Party, a condition included in the New Regulations to nurture religion in China. In the name of the sinicization and subjugation religions are distorted until they become simple instruments of collateral support to the Party.

2. What happens to Catholics, also happens to civil society and the business world. In recent years, control of media, social networks, the population, NGOs has grown ... and even in the business world, submission to the Party is required, on fear of kidnappings, arrests and convictions.
  3. China ploughs ahead undisturbed trampling on religious rights, civil society and commerce thanks to the indifference of the international community or the servility of many states which in view of possible, rapid economic gains with the Chinese market, turn a blind eye to these violations.
  4. The international community and the Chinese government suffer from myopia: they do not realize that religions – not only Catholicism and Protestantism – are spreading ever more rapidly just as esteem for Party politics is diminishing. The result is an erosion of Chinese society and a greater need for political and economic reforms. Ensuring religious freedom for Christian communities and other faiths could help China to achieve greater cohesion by saving it from chaos.
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# The EU tolerates the exploitation of North Korean workers in Poland

**EUReporter TV & Human Rights Without Frontiers Video Project**

**The EU tolerates the exploitation of North Korean workers in Poland despite the UN**

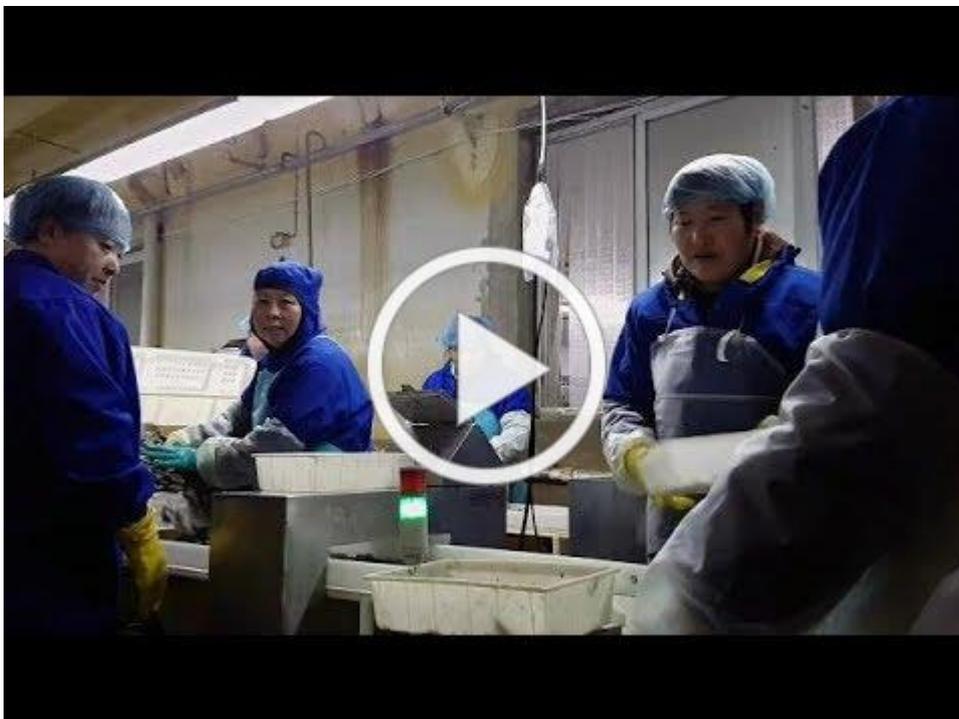
**and its own sanctions**

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Since the thaw of the relations between North Korea and the US as well as South Korea, the media have focused their attention on the denuclearization process of the Korean Peninsula and

have largely failed to report about the persisting egregious violations of human rights.

In October, at the European Parliament, HRWF and MEP Laszlo Tökes presented the film “Dollar Heroes” denouncing the exploitation of North Korean Workers by Pyongyang in Poland with the complicity of the Polish authorities.

Watch the video report of the screening of the film, interviews and the panel discussion, moderated by Dr Zsuzsa Anna Ferenczy, with MEP Laszlo Tökes, Tristan Chytroschek (the producer of the movie), Prof. Remco Breuker (University of Leiden), Eun Kyong Kwon (Open North Korea/ ICNK) and Willy Fautré (HRWF).

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**BELGIUM:                   Citizenship  
deprivation           against           dual  
nationals           recruiting   young  
Muslims           ,           an           efficient**

# measure?

– By Willy Fautré, Human Rights Without Frontiers –

HRWF (27.10.2018) – On 23 October 2018, the Court of Appeal of Antwerp stripped dual national Fouad Belkacem of his Belgian citizenship, leaving the leader of Sharia4Belgium with his sole Moroccan nationality. He was accused of recruiting young Muslims as jihadists for the Islamic State. In 2015, Fouad Belkacem was sentenced to 12 years in jail and fined 300,000 euros for being the leader of a terrorist outfit. Without his Belgian nationality, Fouad Belkacem can be expelled to Morocco but he can still take the matter to the Court of Cassation where procedural issues are settled. Belgian Asylum Secretary Theo Francken has welcomed the news on social media. On Twitter he wrote: “Terrorist leader loses nationality. Excellent, but it should happen automatically in the event of a terrorism conviction.”

On 1 December 2017, the Court of Appeal in Brussels deprived two dual nationals of their Belgian citizenship. It ruled that Bilal Soughir, who had recruited in 2005 the Belgian and first Western kamikaze Muriel Degauque, would be stripped of his Belgian citizenship and would consequently only retain his Tunisian nationality. It also ruled that Malika El Aroud, a 58-year-old woman convicted of recruiting young Brussels Muslims to fight in the so-called “holy war” in Afghanistan, be stripped of her Belgian citizenship. She now only has Moroccan citizenship. In her case, the proceedings started in 2014 but took three years before the decision of the court because her solicitor had taken the case to the Constitutional Court. At the Court of Appeal, the Advocate-General said that Ms El Aroud no longer deserved Belgian citizenship as “for many years she has continually spread jihadism in our country”. Malika El Aroud, also known as the “Black Widow of the Jihad, had twice been married to Muslim extremists, both of whom died in the so-called “holy war”. She was first the

wife of Dahmane Abd al-Sattar, a.k.a. Abdessatar Dahmane, one of the men who killed anti-Taliban leader Ahmad Shah Massoud two days before the September 11, 2001 attacks. Arrested in 2008 for recruiting young Muslims for Osama bin Laden, she was sentenced to 8 years in prison and fined 5,000 euro for terrorist-related offences in 2010.

Recruiting young people for the jihad in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries is a drama for their families and training them on such battlefields for subsequently perpetrating terrorist attacks in Europe constitutes a serious threat to national and human security in Belgium and other European countries. However, court procedures aiming at the deprivation of their citizenship take many years in democratic countries as there are many possibilities of legal recourse. Moreover, such a court decision can only be effective if they are immediately deported at the end of their prison term and if their country of origin accepts them...

### ***Fouad Belkacem: Belgian Islamist leader loses citizenship***

BBC (23.10.2018) – <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45951138> – Jailed Islamist Fouad Belkacem, whose group Sharia4Belgium sent dozens of jihadists to Syria, has been stripped of his Belgian citizenship and faces deportation to Morocco.

The appeal court in Antwerp ruled that he had fallen seriously short of his duties as a citizen.

Belkacem was jailed in 2015 for leading a terror group, many of whose recruits joined jihadist group Islamic State.

More Belgians per capita went to fight in Syria than from any other EU state.

Some of those who returned to Europe were involved in the Paris attacks in 2015 and the Brussels bombings of March 2016.

Belkacem's Sharia4Belgium originated in Antwerp, recruiting the first Belgian fighters before it was disbanded.

It took its inspiration from Islam4UK, a group once led by Anjem Choudary, a radical preacher who was released from a British jail on 19 October. During Belkacem's 2015 trial it emerged that he had co-founded Sharia4Belgium shortly after spending time at a London mosque.

Another group known as the Zerkani network recruited jihadists, such as Paris attacker Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Brussels bomber Najim Laachraoui, from the Molenbeek area of Brussels.

After he was given a 12-year jail term, Belgian officials began work on removing his citizenship. As a dual national he retains Moroccan citizenship.

Belgian Migration Minister Theo Francken praised the decision to strip Belkacem of his Belgian nationality, but added that such a move should be automatic after any terrorism conviction.

Removing citizenship from jihadists with dual nationality remains controversial. France announced plans to introduce the policy after the November 2015 attacks but dropped them the following year.

Belkacem is not the first Belgian linked to terror to lose his nationality. Malika el-Aroud was stripped of her citizenship last year for leading an al-Qaeda linked group.

He can still appeal against the decision to Belgium's court of last resort, the court of cassation, or to the European Court of Justice.

His lawyer, Liliane Verjauw, said he no longer had any connection to Morocco and considered himself Belgian.

"His family has been here for 50 years, over three

generations. His Belgian nationality is part of his identity," she said.

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# European Parliament: HRWF debate on child marriage on EU REPORTER TV

– Watch the video here: [https://youtu.be/wg0K0\\_XA6Vg](https://youtu.be/wg0K0_XA6Vg)

## Panelists

**Elisa Van Ruiten**, a Gender Specialist at Human Rights Without Frontiers International;

**Mohinder Watson**, a researcher and activist against child marriage, who escaped a forced marriage of her own as a teenager;

**Emilio Puccio**, the Coordinator of the European Parliament Intergroup on Children's Rights, which is a cross-party and cross-national group comprising over 90 MEPs and 25 child-focused organizations.

**The presenter was EU Reporter's Jim Gibbons.**

"Every day somewhere in the world, 39,000 young girls are married before they reach the age of majority; more than a third of them are younger than 15, according to the Council of Europe. We may be well into the 21st century but too many girls are still forced to live in a bygone age of male dominance. Human Rights Without Frontiers has just produced a report on women's rights and the Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism."

EU Reporter – <https://bit.ly/2CTvNPh>

**Next Programme about North Korea (November) –**

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# **Open letter to French President Macron about the stoning to death of an unmarried couple in Mali**

**To His Excellency, Emmanuel Macron, President of France**

Dear Mr Macron,

On the eve of your trip to Mali, an unmarried couple was publicly stoned to death in Taghlit, close to Aguelhok in the Kidal region, in the first such incident since jihadi groups were driven out of the region.

Human Rights Without Frontiers is very concerned about the persistence of this inhumane and barbaric practice in Mali and urges you to raise the issue with the political and judicial authorities in Mali.

Human Rights Without Frontiers also asks you to mandate your diplomatic mission in Mali to monitor the follow up of the investigation and judicial prosecution by the Malian authorities.

“The Islamists dug two holes where they put the man and the

woman who lived maritally without being married,” said a local official. “They were stoned to death.” Four people threw stones at them until they died.

Another local official said the ringleaders had accused the unmarried couple of violating “Islamic law”, which requires punishment by stoning.

During their brief control of key towns in the north, jihadist groups imposed a version of Sharia law which forced women to wear veils and set whipping and stoning as punishment for transgressions.

In July 2012, the Al-Qaida-linked Ansar Dine group stoned a couple in public in Aguelhok they had accused of having children outside marriage. (Brussels)

Best regards.

Willy Fautré, director  
Human Rights Without Frontiers

For more information, see

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/17/unmarried-couple-stoned-to-death-mali-islamic-law>

<http://www.siawi.org/article14502.html>