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Turkey's illegal detention of Pastor Brunson

Written question No. 728 to the Committee of Ministers
by Mr José Ramón GARCÍA HERNÁNDEZ, Spain, Group of the European People's Party

Andrew Brunson, a US citizen, who had lived peacefully and without incident for more than 23 years in Turkey, serving as a pastor and leader of a Christian community there, has now been detained for over a year in a Turkish prison, without any evidence, nor even official charges. This Christian pastor has become a bargaining chip for Turkey since President Erdoğan recently demanded a swap of Pastor Brunson for Fethullah Gülen, the cleric he blames for the failed coup attempt in July of 2016, who has now found refuge in the United States.

All these events have taken place while Turkey, as a member State of the Council of Europe and party to the European Convention on Human Rights, has undertaken conventional and international commitments to respect and apply human rights within its territory and towards the people under its jurisdiction. These rights notably include freedom of thought, conscience and religion, right to liberty and security, right to a fair trial, no punishment without law, and many others that are currently denied to Pastor Brunson by the Turkish authorities.

Andrew Brunson's emblematic case has caught much attention around the world. Yet, the Turkish government decided last summer to levy new and additional accusations against Brunson, even though no evidence has been put forth to substantiate them. Meanwhile, Pastor Brunson remains detained despite the fact that he continues to adamantly maintain his innocence and deny all the accusations.

Mr José Ramón García Hernández,

To ask the Committee of Ministers,

In view of this obvious denial of human rights, what do you intend to do to ensure that Turkey adheres to its European commitments and obligations? And what can you do to ensure the effective enjoyment of the rights enshrined in the European Convention by Pastor Brunson?