

To: Commissioner for Trade, Valdis Dombrovskis

On 17 January, the National Assembly of Pakistan passed the Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill with the specific purpose of increasing the punishment of insulting pious personalities of the Islam, specifically family members of the prophet Muhammad, from three to ten years imprisonment. As a beneficiary under the EU's GSP+ program, Pakistan is bound to a number of international conventions, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, protecting the freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief.

- Does the Commissioner agree that the new legislation is another demonstration that Pakistan is being reluctant in complying with its obligations under the GSP+ arrangement and with regard to international law in general?
- Can the Commissioner confirm that this new development will be a significant factor of evaluation in the ongoing bi-annual review of Pakistan as a GSP+ beneficiary?
- Does the Commissioner agree that this development is yet another reason to consider the temporary withdrawal of Pakistan's GSP+-status, as asked for by the Parliament in its resolution 2021/2647 of 28 April 2021?