



Dear Mr Alexander de Croo,  
Dear Ms Sarah Schlitz,  
Dear Mr Vincent Van Quickenborne,  
Dear Ms Annelies Verlinden,

We are writing to express our deepest concern regarding the numerous testimonies of women who publicly stated around mid-October that they were victims of sexual violence, in Brussels and in Gent. We learned that these women were drugged and sexually abused and that these violations have been going on for several years, suggesting a pattern of sexual violence that goes well beyond isolated cases.

Moreover, neighbours of the affected areas have expressed that they were aware of some of the attacks and of the unsafe climate for women in the neighbourhood. In addition, most of the complaints that victims filed were closed and remain unpunished. The climate of tolerance and impunity this case shows is extremely worrying.

Since women publicly spoke about these abuses, there have been a few demonstrations in Brussels calling for an urgent institutional response and for ending the rape culture that allows sexual violence to spread. We, as Members of the European Parliament, stand in solidarity with the women taking the streets and especially to those who have suffered sexual violence: we believe you.

We echo their demands to adopt strong measures to investigate and to prevent further aggressions. We recall that Belgium is a signatory of the Istanbul Convention and that, as such, it should uphold a comprehensive framework, policies and measures for the protection of and assistance to all victims of violence against women, including sexual violence.

In parallel, we have been informed that the Belgian government is amending the current criminal code regarding sexual violence and that several women's grassroots organizations are interested in contributing to the process.

All in all, as Members of the European Parliament, we ask you to ensure:

- The immediate closure of the bars where sexual aggressions took place until investigations are fully conducted;
- The opening of centers for victims of sexual violence around the country as it was agreed at the government level to make sure all victims access the necessary services;
- To reopen and further investigate the aforementioned complaints that were closed, in order to identify and condemn the perpetrator(s);
- To include women's organisations in the debate regarding the amendment of the criminal code;
- To use all means to put an end to the rape culture that lies behind sexual violence and to enforce the Istanbul Convention commitments.

Sincerely,

Maria Eugenia Rodríguez Palop MEP, The Left  
Miguel Urbán Crespo MEP, The Left

Manon Aubry MEP The Left  
Margrete Auken MEP Greens/EFA  
Pernando Barrena MEP The Left  
Malin Björk MEP The Left  
Damian Boeselager MEP Greens/EFA  
Marc Botenga MEP The Left  
Leila Chaibi MEP The Left  
Cyrus Engerer MEP S&D  
Cornelia Ernst MEP The Left  
Giorgos Georgiou MEP The Left  
Jose Gusmao MEP The Left  
Anja Hazekamp MEP The Left  
Niyazi Kızılyürek MEP The Left  
Dietmar Köster MEP S&D  
Stelios Kouloglou MEP The Left  
Elena Kountoura MEP The Left  
Marisa Matias MEP The Left  
Dimitrios Papadimoulis MEP The Left  
Anne Sophie Pelletier MEP The Left  
Sandra Pereira MEP The Left

Joao Pimenta MEP The Left  
Manu Pineda MEP The Left  
Sira Rego MEP The Left  
Diana Riba i Giner MEP Greens/EFA  
Kim van Sparrentak MEP Greens/EFA  
Monika Vana MEP Greens/EFA  
Idoia Villanueva ruiz MEP The Left  
Nikolaj Villumsen MEP The Left  
Marianne Vind, MEP S&D