

**Question for written answer E-007997/2011
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Reinhard Bütikofer (Verts/ALE)

Subject: VP/HR - Inquiry into role of European companies in human rights violations (part II) and the export of dual-use technologies

I refer to your answer of 20 May 2011 to the written question by my colleague MEP Mrs Schaake 'Inquiry into role of European companies in violation of human rights', tabled on 9 March 2011, and your letter of 1 June 2011. It is undisputed that technologies imported from the EU and designed by European companies¹ are being used by repressive regimes. Concerning the case of Egypt, newspapers have extensively reported² about the European telephone company Vodafone conducting its business under the direct control of the former Mubarak regime, in shutting down its services whilst sending pro-government text messages. Additionally, investigative journalism by Bloomberg has highlighted the role of Finnish/German Nokia Siemens Networks in Bahrain³.

1. Can the High Representative explain whether she and/or the Commission has the power, and if so, is willing, to start an inquiry into whether the business operations and conduct of European ICT, security and telecom companies and their subsidiaries, i.e. those with a legally registered office in the EU, might have contributed to human rights violations, in particular in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain and Iran, or might do so in the future? If not, why not?
2. Does the High Representative agree that the export of ICT, as well as other technological dual-use items and software, to states and state-owned companies with repressive governments has become instrumental in the violation of human rights? If not, why not?
3. Does the High Representative agree that an EU export and licensing mechanism for dual-use technologies such as COM(2008)0854 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1334/2000 setting up a Community regime for the control of exports of dual-use items and technology and the new part 3, paragraph 1, point 1, point cb introduced by the European Parliament is an important element to prevent European companies and technologies from becoming an accessory to and instrumental in human rights violations? If so, is the High Representative, in the context of the Commission's Green Paper on the dual-use export control system of the European Union: ensuring security and competitiveness in a changing world (COM(2011) 393 final), willing to
 - continuously review and update 'lists' of potential harmful technologies, and
 - propose a (global) early warning mechanism that includes the notification of the deterioration of freedom of expression, freedom of the press, internet freedom and the misuse of European ICT technology in violating people's universal human rights? If not, why not?
4. Does the High Representative agree that European companies have the corporate responsibility of implementing internal measures and compliance mechanisms to comply with EU export restrictions on dual-use technologies, and should face the consequences in case of breach of these provisions? If not, why not?

¹ <http://www.nokiasiemensnetworks.com/news-events/press-room/statement-to-the-public-hearing-on-new-information-technologies-and-human-rights>

² <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703652104576122044234987416.html>;
<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-02-03/vodafone-ordered-to-send-egyptian-government-messages-update1-.html>

³ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/print/2011-08-22/torture-in-bahrain-becomes-routine-with-help-from-nokia-siemens-networking.html>

5. Does the High Representative agree that both the EU and European companies should make efforts to raise awareness, both inside and outside the EU, of the double-edged sword technologies can represent and of how end-users can protect themselves against misuse, including the drafting of an EU code of conduct for ICTs and telcos?