



## Opening: tributes to Gilles Jacquier, Manuel Fraga Iribarne and Václav Havel

Plenary sessions

**Outgoing President Jerzy Buzek paid posthumous tributes to Gilles Jacquier, a French journalist killed in the Syrian city of Homs, Spanish statesman Manuel Fraga Iribarne, and Czech statesman Václav Havel. He also expressed Parliament's condolences to the families of those killed in an Italian cruise liner disaster at the weekend.**

Mr Buzek paid tribute to Gilles Jacquier, a French journalist killed in the Syrian city of Homs on 11 January. Noting that over one hundred journalists had been killed worldwide in the past year alone, he reiterated Parliament's commitment to freedom of speech.

He also expressed Parliament's condolences to the families of the people killed in the Italian cruise ship disaster of 14 January. This tragedy should never have happened, and "lessons must be learned" from it, he added.

Manuel Fraga Iribarne, who died on 15 January, was a great statesman, a key architect of Spain's democratization, a founder of the Partido Popular and, in the 1980s, an MEP, said Mr Buzek, who asked the daughter of the deceased, MEP Carmen Fraga Estévez, to convey Parliament's condolences to the entire family.

Finally, Mr Buzek paid tribute to Václav Havel, who died on 18 December 2011. Mr Havel, a symbol of the "Velvet Revolution" and European reunification, was an outstanding intellectual, writer and courageous statesman, whose address to the European Parliament two years previously had been greeted with a standing ovation, recalled Mr Buzek. Mr Havel's funeral in Prague, which Mr Buzek attended, had been an "intercontinental expression of respect" for this great European, he concluded.

A minute's silence was held for both statesmen.

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