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MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Oral Questions B5-0478/2000 and B5-0479/2000

pursuant to Rule 42(5) of the Rules of Procedure

by the following Members: Pierre Schori, Pasqualina Napoletano, Jannis Sakellariou, Marie-Arlette Carlotti, Hannes Swoboda, Maria Carrilho and Alexandros Baltas

on behalf of the PSE Group

on the situation of the press in Tunisia

European Parliament resolution on the situation of the press in Tunisia

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions, particularly those of 30 March 2000 on the European Union's Mediterranean policy,
 - having regard to the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995, which lays down the principle on which a fully structured dialogue between the European Union and its Mediterranean partner countries must be based,
 - having regard to the association agreement establishing a political dialogue between the European Union and Tunisia in a spirit of partnership based on equality of rights and obligations, particularly Article 2 thereof, which states the obligation to respect human rights and democratic principles,
- A. having regard to the principles on which the Tunisian declaration of 7 November 1986 is based,
- B. having regard to the repeated declarations by the Tunisian authorities, and particularly the Head of State, of their intention to liberalise political life in Tunisia and to establish political plurality in parliamentary and cultural life and in the area of information,
- C. having regard to the political situation which has developed during the recent period marked by attacks on press freedom, in clear opposition to the undertakings made vis-à-vis the Tunisian people and also Tunisia's European partner, inter alia at the 2nd meeting of the EU/Tunisia association council held on 24 January 2000,
- D. whereas the most effective way of responding to the concern expressed by the Tunisian authorities that Tunisia's image should not be tarnished is to adopt greater political openness and ensure that the political undertakings entered into at all levels are honoured,
- E. whereas one of the mainstays of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership is the promotion of human rights, public freedoms, the rule of law and good governance. Whereas, furthermore, this political dimension is an essential element in the policy of association between the European Union and its partner countries, directed at creating a set of common values while respecting the specific historical and cultural background of each,
- F. whereas the political dialogue between the European Union and its Mediterranean partner countries must be conducted in a spirit of openness and solidarity and in accordance with the concept of 'mutual constructive intervention',
- G. whereas social dialogue, also, is an important aspect of the agreement, and should be paid particular attention with a view to reinforcing the human dimension of the partnership between Tunisia and Europe,

- H. whereas Tunisia has performed well economically and is actively preparing to implement the economic and commercial liberalisation measures envisaged in the association agreement with the European Union, which is its main external partner,
- I. having regard to the concerns expressed by the Tunisian authorities as regards the challenge of implementing the association agreement, particularly with reference to the stability of the financial support needed in order to adapt Tunisia's economy and face the potential risk of unemployment following the opening up of the Tunisian market to the EU,
- J. whereas economic openness, if it is to benefit the entire population, necessarily implies respect for the rules and standards of constitutional democracy and the seeking of social consensus,
1. Calls on Tunisia's Head of State to adopt concrete measures to implement the undertakings he has entered into, particularly that to revise the rules governing the press and to remove the obstacles placed in the way of journalists so that they can play to the full their role of providing information and critical comment;
 2. Notes the willingness of the Tunisian President to create conditions favourable to the emergence of a parliamentary and local-government opposition and calls for the introduction of constitutional guarantees of a multi-party state;
 3. Calls on the Commission and the Tunisian authorities to collaborate on training programmes for journalists and the police, and to promote the contribution of civil society;
 4. Calls on the Council to convene an early special meeting of the association council in order to clarify the content of Article 2 of the association agreement and to establish guidelines with Tunisia on matters such as respect for human rights, freedom of the press and the right to a defence;
 5. Calls on the Council and the Commission to monitor closely the development of the human rights situation in Tunisia and to present it with an annual report on the subject;
 6. Calls on the Commission and Council to present and adopt the joint strategy for the Mediterranean as quickly as possible;
 7. Wishes the Council and the Commission to act to ensure that the MEDA II regulation and budget (2000-2006) can enter into force as quickly as possible;
 8. Instructs its Delegation for relations with the Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union to convene an early meeting with our Tunisian parliamentary partners to discuss the human rights situation in general and to look together at legal arrangements to protect press freedom and freedom of speech;

9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States and the Tunisian Government.