

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

---

*Session document*

4.7.2006

B6-0411/06

## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

with request for inclusion in the agenda for the debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure

by Henrik Lax and Marios Matsakis

on behalf of the ALDE Group

on freedom of expression on the Internet

**European Parliament resolution on freedom of expression on the Internet**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous annual reports on the situation of human rights in the world;
  - having regard to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders (2004) and on Human Rights Dialogue (2001);
  - having regards to the EU policy on human rights and democratisation in third countries adopted by the Council in December 2005;
  - having regard to the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR);
- A. whereas the fight for freedom of expression has today largely shifted on-line where the internet has become means of expression of choice for pro-democracy activists, human rights defenders and journalists worldwide;
- B. whereas authoritarian regimes and governments have been working on ever more far-reaching methods of controlling the net, chiefly using more and more sophisticated filtering technology and surveillance of electronic communications;
- C. whereas China is in the frontline in this onslaught against freedom of expression on the internet but is not however the only country to have taken a tough political line; at least 14 other countries can be seen as enemies of freedom of expression on-line: Belarus, Burma, Cuba, Iran, Libya, Maldives, Nepal, North Korea, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkmenistan and Vietnam;
- D. whereas companies based in democratic states have given these countries the means to censor the web and to monitor electronic communication;
- E. whereas Yahoo, Google and Microsoft agree to censor their services by following orders from the Chinese government, other companies like Secure Computing and Fortinet supply governments in Tunisia or Burma with the means to censor the internet;
- F. whereas CISCO Systems sell police in these countries equipment allowing surveillance of internet users and Yahoo has been collaborating for several years with the Chinese justice system resulting in arrests of journalists and political dissidents;

- G. concerned by the fact that in Cuba, a country in which the internet is heavily censored, it is a EU firm, Telecom Italia, which runs the network;
  - H. concerned by the fact that Wanadoo, a subsidiary of France Telecom announced in April of last year that it was launching a broad band service with Tunisian operator, Tunisia Planet; where the Tunisian government decided to make all opposition websites inaccessible in the country;
  - I. Welcoming the fact that US legislators introduced a draft law in February 2006, the Global On-line Freedom Act aimed at regulating the activities of the internet sector businesses when they operate in repressive countries;
  - J. believing that the EU should demonstrate that the rights of internet users are at the heart of its concerns and that it is ready to act to promote free expression on-line;
1. Reaffirms the fact that freedom of expression is a key value shared by all EU countries and that they have to take concrete steps to defend it;
  2. Calls on the EU Council and its Member States to agree on a joint statement confirming their commitment in favour of the protection of the rights of internet users and of the promotion of free expression on the internet worldwide;
  3. Calls on the Commission and the Council to draw up a code of conduct that would put limits on the activities of companies in repressive countries;
  4. Recalls that freedom of expression is one of the priority issue of the EU human rights dialogue and a key element of the EU's policy in promoting human rights and democratisation in third countries;
  5. Expresses its concern at the policies of major internet firms Yahoo and Google which have bowed directly and indirectly to Chinese government demands for censorship; calls for a ban on the automatic use of the search engines of those two companies in the website of the European Parliament as long as they do not comply with a code of conduct which binds them to respecting freedom of expression;
  6. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States.