

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2597/00  
by Pervenche Berès (PSE)  
to the Commission

Subject: EU-Tunisia relations

Human rights violations in Tunisia are a source of great concern. It is incumbent on the international community and in particular the EU to encourage the Tunisian Government to greater tolerance and respect for freedoms.

The recent hunger strike by the journalist Ben Brik has highlighted the pressures on those campaigning for greater democracy in Tunisia.

On 15 June Parliament adopted a resolution calling for a greater openness on the part of the Tunisian authorities, and asking the EU-Tunisia Association Council to carry out a joint evaluation of respect for human rights in Tunisia, in the spirit of Article 2 of the Agreement.

On 23 June 2000 the Commission met a Tunisian delegation in the framework of the association committee to study the cooperation agreements between Tunisia and the Union. The day before, Commissioner Fischler had talks with Mr Rabah, the Tunisian Minister of Fisheries. From the information that has emerged on these two meetings, it would appear that only economic matters were discussed.

Without denying the importance of the latter, I am surprised at the one-sided nature of these talks.

Economic development will be of benefit to Tunisian society only if it is accompanied by the establishment of a genuinely democratic regime.

What is the Commission's explanation of this attitude which is contrary both to the spirit and the letter of the Association Agreement?

What action does the Commission intend to take to comply with the requirements made by Parliament in its resolution of 15 June?