

WRITTEN QUESTION E-2613/01

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to the Commission

Subject: Arrest of 52 homosexuals in Egypt - consequences for the EuroMed Agreement

On 11 May 2001, Egyptian police officers raided the Queen Boat in Cairo. 52 men were arrested on charges of 'practising immorality' and 'offending religion'. The men have had their names, photographs and addresses published in Cairo newspapers. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have expressed 'grave concern' that the detainees have been tortured in detention and will not have any right of appeal.

It is generally believed that the 52 men have been arrested solely because of their sexual orientation and for using the freedom of assembly guaranteed to them in various treaties ratified by Egypt.

1. Which treaties ratified by Egypt does the Commission consider violated by this trial?
2. What action has the Commission undertaken and does it plan to undertake in the near future to ensure the release of the 52 men?
3. On 25 June 2001, the Commission signed the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement between the EC and the Arab Republic of Egypt. At that moment, the above incident was known about. a) Were the arrests discussed in the negotiations on the Agreement? If so, what is the reason that the treaty was signed without any guarantees from the Egyptian authorities on the fate of these 52 men? If not, why not? b) Have any of the Member States indicated they will not ratify this treaty until all 52 men are released? If a Member State chooses not to ratify what will be the consequences?
4. According to the Commission's own information, the EU is the most important trading partner of Egypt. Moreover, Egypt is a major beneficiary of EU financial co-operation. What other consequences will the trial have for EU-Egyptian relations, especially for the amount and distribution of MEDA financing?