

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0365/02  
by Pere Esteve (ELDR)  
to the Commission

Subject: Human rights violations in refugee camps

Except during the recent Belgian Presidency, the Great Lakes region has over the last few years barely featured in the EU's foreign policy. Refugees from the Burundi conflict are currently in an alarming situation, especially since the Tanzanian Government made statements calling for the forced repatriation of Burundian refugees who are currently on its territory.

Reports from various international organisations working amongst the refugees indicate that the latter are subject to restrictions on their fundamental rights and freedoms, such as the right to education (primary education is patchy, largely on account of the fact that the Tanzanian Government does not want the refugees to be better educated than its own people), the right to work (refugees are prohibited from working the land and from growing agricultural produce, even for their own consumption), freedom of expression (political debate is banned), freedom of association (the right of assembly is totally suppressed within the camps) and freedom of movement (restricted by means of the 'four-kilometre law', which prevents any refugee from straying more than that distance from the camp at which he or she is registered).

Pursuant to the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees, refugees are required to be treated at least as favourably as the nationals of the country of refuge in terms of the rights they are granted.

Can the violations of, and the restrictions imposed on, the refugees' human rights be justified on the grounds of national security and public order? What view does the Commission take of the matter? Are the Commission's third-country aid bodies active in this area?