

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3380/03

by Christos Zacharakis (PPE-DE) and Konstantinos Hatzidakis (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Representations to the Egyptian authorities to implement the principles of democracy and the protection of human rights

In 1989 the Egyptian Government arrested in Suez and sentenced to death three Greek seamen from the 'Thanassis' on charges of smuggling, even though their guilt was never proven. After pressure from prominent European personalities, these sentences were later commuted to life imprisonment.

This affair received widespread media coverage, and many Greek radio and television programmes were broadcast on the subject. A book was also published describing the unwarranted sentences handed down on them and the wretched conditions of detention in Egyptian prisons. Two of the three seamen have already died in Egyptian prisons, while the third, Konstantinos Kastanias, is seriously ill and is slowly dying in al-Qanatir prison.

The European Parliament has repeatedly expressed the need to strengthen democracy in Egypt (Resolutions P5_TA(2002)0378, P5_TA(2002)0410) and has referred to the specific case of the wretched conditions of detention of Konstantinos Kastanias, calling on the Egyptian authorities to permit him to be transferred to Greece on humanitarian grounds (Resolution P5_TA-PROV(2003)0192, 10.4.2003). It will also be recalled that Article 2 of the Cooperation Agreement between Egypt and the European Union calls for respect for human rights and the principles of democracy and that Commissioner Chris Patten made a statement before the plenary of the European Parliament on 5 September 2002 urging Egypt to adopt the highest judicial and democratic standards if it is to achieve its developmental and political ambitions. Particularly in view of its cooperation with Egypt and the above statement, will the Commission say what immediate measures it intends to take to prevail upon Egypt to heed the European Parliament's request and allow Konstantinos Kastanias who is dying to be transferred to Greece, in accordance with the above European Parliament Resolution P5_TA-prov(2003)0192 of 10.4.2003?