

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3701/03

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to the Commission

Subject: Misappropriation of Community funds intended for the Palestinian National Authority

On 15 September 2003 the International Monetary Fund reported that, over the 1995-2000 period, US\$900 million had been paid from the Palestinian National Authority's fund into a special account controlled directly by Yasser Arafat.

At the end of October 2003 a group of Palestinian Legislative Council members belonging to the Democratic Block called for a committee of inquiry to be set up for the purpose of investigating the hundreds of thousands of dollars belonging to the Palestinian people which had allegedly ended up in secret Swiss bank accounts controlled directly by Yasser Arafat.

Lesley Stahl, a reporter on the prestigious television programme Sixty Minutes (broadcast by the US television network CBS), has calculated how much it costs each day for Mrs Suah Arafat (the wife of President Yasser Arafat) to stay in Paris (reputedly US\$16 000).

Since 1994 the European Union has paid over EUR 1500 million to the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo 'peace agreements'.

- What action has the Commission taken in order to verify what the IMF stated in September 2003 and in order to ensure that money belonging to the people of Europe and paid to the PNA no longer ends up in special accounts which are beyond scrutiny?
- Does the Commission not think that, since the reports from various European and international press sources all tally, the Arafat family's expenses are met to a not-inconsiderable extent out of the funding paid by the EU to the PNA?
- Does the Commission not consider that the EU funding (which continues to be paid to the PNA) should be suspended until it is known whether the committee of inquiry called for by the members of the Palestinian parliament can be set up and can begin its investigatory work?