

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3945/03

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to the Commission

Subject: Use of EU funds for terrorist organisations and checks on funding for the PNA

According to reports published in the German weekly 'Stern' and the UK daily 'The Independent', OLAF and the Belgian police have opened investigations into alleged transfers of EU funds to a militant Palestinian group which is directly responsible for suicide attacks that have claimed victims among the Israeli civilian population. These investigations arise from the allegation that funds intended for the PNA were diverted to the 'Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade', through affiliated organisations in Germany and Belgium. In Germany, the investigations began in Aachen but appear also to concern a cell in Verviers (Belgium). It is claimed that these groups asked for EU funding for an immigration-related project, but that the funds were subsequently transferred to Al-Aqsa, a group which is on the Union's list of banned organisations. These allegations represent only a part of the charges now being investigated by the Belgian authorities.

The Commission appears to have decided to earmark the annual sum of EUR 80 m to the PAN to help it pay its debts to small businesses and fund social services, plus a further EUR 10 m in support of the peace process.

Can the Commission state:

- whether it is aware of or is in a position to refute the press reports concerning the OLAF investigations, and whether these are the same investigations as those being conducted by the German and Belgian authorities;
- whether it is aware of those actions or is in contact with the German and Belgian authorities with a view to obtaining information on the course of other relevant investigations;
- what checks are being made to ascertain whether funding to the PNA has been diverted to Palestinian terrorist groups;
- on what grounds the annual sums earmarked for the PNA have been tied to the payment of its debts with small businesses, and whether specific checks have been made as to where and how the sums transferred thus far from the EU to the PNA have been utilised?