

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0632/04
by Marco Cappato (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Hunger strike by Tunisian journalist Abdallah Zouari

The Tunisian journalist Abdallah Zouari, sentenced on 29 August 2003 to 13 months' imprisonment for 'defamation' and 'failure to comply with an administrative decision', has been on hunger strike for 20 days. On 17 February 2004, his family learned that the Tunisian prison authorities had, for the second week running, refused them permission to visit him in prison.

As far back as 2002, regarding a previous arrest of Mr Zouari (joint reply to Written Questions E-2526/02, E-2597/02 and E-2629/02¹), the Commission expressed 'doubts concerning the re-arrest of Mr Abdallah Zouari and the legitimacy of the administrative measure behind it'.

Has the Commission moved to call on its office in Tunis to request a prison visit to Mr Zouari? If not, does the Commission intend to do so in the next few days?

What conclusions has the Commission drawn about the 'legitimacy of the administrative measure' used in Mr Zouari's case, over which it had expressed doubts?

Does the Commission intend to intervene with the Tunisian authorities to call for the release of political dissidents, in particular the journalists Hamadi Jebali and Abdallah Zouari, who were arrested for expressing their opinion?

¹ OJ C 155 E, 3.7.2003, p. 26.