

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1111/04
by Marco Cappato (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Respect for press freedom in Tunisia

A demonstration organised by Tunisian human rights organisations and political movements was held outside the State broadcasting headquarters in Tunis on 27 March 2004 in order to call for freedom of the press in Tunisia. The protesters, consisting of members of 10 organisations and five (official and unofficial) political parties and part of a national press freedom campaign, tried to hand over a letter to the director of the state broadcaster demanding that civil society groups be granted access to the Tunisian airwaves. Police dispersed the protesters less than one hour after the start of the demonstration.

On 19 February, a similar demonstration was dispersed by the security forces.

In view of the fact that:

- on 26 December 2003 an EU-Tunisia cooperation agreement was signed concerning a programme for the benefit of the media, in particular the 'Centre Africain de perfectionnement des Journalistes and des Communicateurs', the Board of Directors of which includes a number of Tunisian government representatives;
- on 8 March 2004 the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) struck the Tunisian Journalists' Association off its list of members, because it is totally controlled by the State;
- the first preparatory meeting for the second stage of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) is to be held in Tunis from 23 to 26 June 2004,

can the Commission say:

- what instruments it has devised to ensure that the programmes in the media sector funded by the Union in Tunisia are made accessible to journalists working for the opposition press;
- what interlocutors the Commission has selected to ensure the involvement of Tunisian journalists and media not controlled by the State?