

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1331/04
by Marco Cappato (NI)
to the Commission

Subject: Preparatory meetings prior to the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunisia

Prior to the second stage of the World Summit on the Information Society, various preparatory meetings and events organised by non-governmental organisations have been held in Tunisia.

During these events several acts of censorship and surveillance were committed by the Tunisian authorities against Tunisian and foreign civil society organisations, including:

- during the informal meeting of civil society bureau representatives held in Gammarth (Tunisia) on 2 and 3 March it was impossible, either via the wireless system set up specially at the meeting venue or via the computers which the organisers had made available in an Internet cafe, to gain access to the sites of Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org) and Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org), both of which organisations are active at UN level and are well known internationally for their commitment to human rights;
- the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, which recently published its 2003 report, had planned to hold a press conference in Tunis on 14 April in order to present the report. Patrick Baudouin, honorary chairman and former chairman of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), had been invited to speak at the presentation but, when his plane landed at Tunis-Carthage airport on 13 April, he was denied entry to Tunisia and immediately placed back on the same plane, bound for Paris.

What steps and initiatives does the Commission intend to take vis-à-vis the Tunisian authorities with a view to preventing similar situations from arising in future?

Would it not agree that it should summon the Tunisian Ambassador to the EU to provide clarifications regarding the above events?