

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0367/06

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to the Commission

Subject: Freedom of action of NGOs in the Northern Caucasus and effectiveness of EU humanitarian aid

The BBC World Service announced on 17 January 2006 that the Supreme Court of the Republic of Ingushetia had prohibited two European non-governmental organisation (the UK-registered Centre for Peacemaking and Community Development and the German humanitarian group 'Help') from working in a region in which thousands of refugees from Chechnya are living.

The Russian federal authorities recently passed a law giving the Russian authorities extensive powers of interference in the activities of NGOs (including international organisations) throughout the Russian Federation.

On 13 December 2005 the Commission granted EUR 6 million of aid to the victims of the ongoing crisis in the Northern Caucasus, which brings the total amount of EU aid to the region to EUR 26.3, making this aid programme the fifth largest humanitarian operation in the world and making the EU the leading donor in the region.

A significant proportion of the EU's humanitarian programmes in the Northern Caucasus region are run by NGOs whose activities may be obstructed by local authorities, as in the aforementioned cases.

1. Does the Commission not consider the above to be an unacceptable interference by the Russian authorities in the running of humanitarian activities? If so, what measures will it take to guarantee the independence of humanitarian organisations in the Northern Caucasus region?
2. Is the effectiveness of humanitarian aid in the region not being undermined by the recent Russian legislation on NGOs? If so, what measures will the Commission take to enable European humanitarian aid to reach its intended beneficiaries in the most appropriate, rapid and effective manner?