

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3982/06  
by Lapo Pistelli (ALDE)  
to the Commission

Subject:            Respect for human rights in Eritrea

The situation regarding respect for human rights in Eritrea, in accordance with the international conventions signed and ratified by the country's government, is continually deteriorating. Freedom of the press, freedom of opinion and religion and freedom of association are being blatantly violated according to Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Civil society is being severely tested, particularly following the adoption of law 145/2005 regulating the work of local and international associations in the country, which lays down the requirements for the certification of local and international NGOs. In fact, most local and international NGOs have failed to secure the registration needed to continue their activities.

Staff of peace-keeping missions, members of religious groups, NGO representatives and diplomats, all of whom are recognised members of the international community and of civil society, have been expelled from the country.

The Eritrean Government has signed the Cotonou Agreement, the preamble to which refers to the undertaking by signatories to create a climate favourable to the development of the private sector and civil society and to make it easier for them to operate.

The Commission is currently the major donor to Eritrea as regards bilateral and multilateral relations, as well as funds for various purposes channelled through international and local NGOs (it recently provided six million euros to deal with the emergency situation and a further 23 million for related activities).

What guarantees has the Commission secured from the Eritrean Government that EU funds will be used properly with due respect for international agreements?

Will it call on the Eritrean Government to comply with the Cotonou Agreement?

Will it defend the position of European and local NGOs?

Does it intend to renegotiate with the Eritrean Government the terms of European cooperation with the country?