

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4271/08

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to the Commission

Subject: Police brutality during an attempted forcible removal

On 26 April 2008, the Belgian police forcibly removed Serge Fosso from Brussels Airlines flight SN0351 to Kinshasa via Douala. He had protested against the brutal suffocation method used by the police when expelling Ebenizer Folefack Sontsa, a Cameroonian migrant without documents who subsequently died on 1 May 2008 in unclear circumstances at the Merksplas detention centre in Belgium. Following this protest, he was violently removed and detained in a cell at Brussels airport for over 10 hours, with nothing to eat or drink and without being able to contact his family. Brussels Airlines' measures against Mr Fosso include banning him from all Brussels Airlines flights for six months, failing to reimburse his air ticket and failing to reimburse the cost of valuables taken from his hand luggage, which was recovered 12 days later in Douala. Brussels Airlines then told Mr Fosso that it reserved the right to claim damages for commercial injury resulting from the delay and to take proceedings against him. Since then other witnesses of expulsions on Brussels Airlines flights have suffered similar treatment, in particular Mrs Hermine Rigaud, Deputy Mayor of a French municipality, and Mr Gilles Rigaud, a retired police officer.

Is the Commission aware of the facts reported here?

Are expulsion methods that use suffocation, such as those used against the young Ebenizer Folefack Sontsa, in accordance with European standards on human rights and fundamental freedoms?

Does the Commission not think that the Belgian federal police used excessive and disproportionate means of constraint against Mr Sontsa and Mr Fosso?

Has it obtained information from the Belgian authorities on the death of Ebenizer Folefack Sontsa?
Does the Commission not think that Brussels Airlines has violated Mr Fosso's commercial rights?