

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1023/09
by Paul van Buitenen (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: EU funds to private account of Arafat

Is the European Commission familiar with the interview with Mr Efraim Halevy, former ambassador of Israel to the EU, as published in 2006 in the book 'European-Israeli Relations: between confusion and change' by Manfred Gerstenfeld?

In the interview the former ambassador states:

'The EU was also, however, paying the Palestinian Authority in a less than straightforward way. They channelled part of the funds semi-legally. Some money went directly into Yasser Arafat's bank accounts. Once I was meeting Marin (red: former Vice-President of the Commission) when he got a call from the German foreign minister who complained that \$25 million, which Arafat got as 'special emergency funding', had been transferred to the wrong account. It went into the general account and should have gone into his private one'. In his book Mr Halevy writes: 'The commissioner asked the minister for a few minutes' pause and then turned to me and politely asked me to excuse him because he had to attend to the matter at hand. I left, of course, but not before my host had unburdened himself and had expressed his exasperation at the way he was being forced to cooperate in these matters'.

1. Can the Commission confirm whether or not it was pressured into transferring EU funds directly to the private account of the late Yasser Arafat?
2. If so, can the Commission inform Parliament whether or not this happened on a structural basis?
3. Is the Commission willing to investigate these claims?
4. Was this claim and/or similar claims part of the OLAF investigation which was closed on 12 March 2005? If so what were its findings?